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ABSTRACT

The newsletter of the California Association for the Gifted includes the following brief articles on parenting: "Your Challenge, Their Lives" (Barry Ziff); "Courage to Be Who I Am, Unafraid" (Elizabeth Meckstroth); "Attribution: A Key to Encouraging More Responsible Behavior in the Gifted" (Saundra Sparling); "A Parent's Perspective" (Carolyn Wood); "Obstacles Faced by Gifted Children" (Terry Thomas); "Parenting the Gifted--Full Court Press" (Gene Bedley); "Encouraging the Development of Artistic and Creative Talent" (Fran Frey); "What Can a Parent Do?" (Sharon Mountford); "Guidance Needs of the High School Gifted" (Ron Fontaine); "Underachievement in Gifted Girls: How Parents Can Help" (Judith Bernal); "Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being too Good" (Evelyn Verosub); "Beyond Peter and the Wolf: Children and Concerts" (Evelyn Verosub); "A Parent's Guide to High School Honors/AP Courses" (Lorrie Wellenstein); "Parenting the Gifted Preschool Child" (Terry Sorrells); "School Site Councils: An Opportunity to Influence Schools' Priorities" (Judy Graeber); "Youth At-Risk" (Cynthia Myers); "Parenting the Gifted Should Be a Laughing Matter" (Doug Sebring); "School for Preschoolers" (Laura Hathaway); and "Guiding Gifted and Talented Students" (Paul Sheckler). (DB)

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Your Challenge, Their Lives

by Barry Ziff

... Courage to be Who I am, Unafraid

By Elizabeth Meckstroth

We are living during a very exciting period in history. At this very moment new discoveries are being made which will allow each of us to become more aware of our vast potential and our unique abilities.

As parents and teachers, we are responsible for helping young people develop to their full potential. This is one of the most challenging responsibilities any person encounters in his or her life. Many parents raise their children as they were raised, without any outside assistance or support. They live from day to day and situation to situation with no guidelines or goals. It has been my experience that there are no immediate or simple solutions to the many problems that concern parents. The needs of children and their families vary greatly from family to family and community to community. However, there are basic concerns common to all those involved in educating their children.

Those children identified as gifted or talented have abilities and problems that demand nurturing in a responsive and supportive environment. As a parent you are expected to nurture, encourage, support, educate and love your child. You are responsible for creating an independent and loving individual who can cope in today's challenging world. It must be remembered that the best preparation for adulthood is to experience a satisfying childhood in which the child learns to function independently and acquires confidence in his or her abilities.

The role and function of parenting is to maximize the possibilities for successful learning by providing a responsive environment, guidance and love. In this type of learning climate, children learn to respect and accept the values and decisions of their parents. Given the opportunity, as they grow older and more mature, most children have the integral ability to make sense of their world and make meaningful and purposeful decisions concerning their lives. When parents support their children in this manner, it provides the opportunity to develop self-respect and self-esteem.

Much of who we are and how we act is learned. How we think determines how we feel. And how we act is determined

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"If you aren't a good girl, Santa Claus won't bring you any toys." How deeply and pervasively do vestiges of that belief impede our being our best selves? In what ways do we pressure children to follow what we think is best for them and then bestow a reward on them for matching our own notions of excellence, success, or being right? Consider how implications of the Santa Claus myth permeates your own life...In what ways do you meet other people's needs so that they will take care of you?

Loving, synergistic caring about someone else gives us sense of wholeness and competency and creates wondrous relationships that resonate our best selves. However, through my privilege of being with many parents of gifted children (who are usually grown-up gifted children) I've gleaned some hindsight cautions. Felice Kaufmann has acquired life stories of Presidential Scholars that illustrate the struggle to become authentic in a world that rewards dependency on approval from other people. David Willings' research found that when children are not the authors of their own words and behaviors, but speak and perform to achieve what other people value, they tend to grow up resenting the parents who rewarded them. Gifted people who can imagine so many possibilities and who can also bring honor to parents and teachers are particularly vulnerable. Around mid-life, people with exceptional abilities and perceptions might be gnawed by insights such as: "I've spent my whole life facilitating other people's priorities." "I've lived a lie." "I married a role."

Parents of gifted children tend to "overinvest" in their gifted child. David Mellberg, psychologist at St. Olaf's College, offers parents the hindsight he has gained from bright students there: "I feel like I'm my parents' report card." and, "Tell parents to have their own dreams." Perhaps we, as parents, would be making a greater contribution to our family if we also invested in our own sense of self respect and happiness.

Just as our astute children absorb our language, we teach them our values, attitudes, and myths. Perhaps the most important lesson we can teach them is to be authentic. Two of the most valued life goals of gifted children are self respect and

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Editor's Column



by Jody Hess

I have always felt that part of the real Los Angeles experience was being on TV. I set a goal for myself of getting on a game show, and did after trying out for three.

The result of my effort was that I came in third of the three contestants, won no money, but received a "lovely parting gift." However, I had fun, and felt a great deal of satisfaction from being chosen to compete from among the hundred or so who tried out.

I told my students when I was to be on and many watched. Thus began the real learning experience for me. Each class was full of questions they were eager to ask. Along with the expected ones about what a TV studio was like, came an unexpected one. In each group of gifted students with whom I spoke, a considerable number couldn't imagine why I would put myself in the position of appearing "dumb" in front of millions of TV viewers.

Although I explained my goal of being on TV, and the real potential to earn thousand of dollars, this clearly was not enough motivation for many of the students. The potential for failure on such a grand scale far outweighed any sense of adventure and challenge that they could see.

What a wonderful "teachable moment" this became! I had the unexpected opportunity to explain that adults sometimes seek out challenges just for the pleasure; that we set goals and

try difficult things because it is fun and feels good to try. It was risky and scary, I acknowledged, but it was also thrilling and exhilarating for me! And what was the worst that would happen? Would the Game Show Police come and take me away for being dumb? Could I live through the humiliation of not winning? I guess so, because I have.

What's the point of this? We as parents and adults need to let our bright children know when, why and how we challenge ourselves, when striving for something that appears beyond our grasp. Not a fool-hardy risk-taking, but an endeavor that requires more than our average effort... one that takes all the drive we can muster.

We as adults find much of the personal satisfaction and growth in our lives from trying things when we have no assurance of success. What a feeling to communicate to children! The stimulation that keeps us living and learning, that keeps our minds active, comes from risking a little, from trying something new. Be a model of the adult you want your child to become. Reach and try for something beyond your grasp, and let your child know why!

Our able guest editors for this issue are Barry Ziff and Karen Hostettler. Barry, Assistant Professor of Education at Cal State Los Angeles and a parent, is the regional representative to the CAG Board from Mission Region. He has spoken to and written for parents about what they can do to help their children become fulfilled individuals.

Karen writes as a parent and chair of CAG's State Parent Council. Her views on the crisis in gifted education come from her involvement with local and state issues. She implores us to become active in support of the cause of appropriate education for all gifted students.

We hope you agree this issue has something of value for each member of our reading audience. Please share it with other parents of gifted children!



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Barry Ziff



Children, as well as ideas, do not develop in a vacuum. Children grow in a warm and supportive environment, nurtured by friends, teachers and family. It was reported in a recent Gallup Poll that eight out of every ten people stated that "family" was one of the most, or the most, important part of their lives.

To most of us, our families represent our most intimate relationships. The nature of this

bond has a great influence on the way we perceive ourselves and others throughout our lives. This is not new information. Throughout history the family has been vital to the well-being and even in some instances the survival of individuals and nations. The family is the basic foundation of civilization. Our happiness and well-being as individuals are dependent upon the character of our family relationships.

As parents, we realize that nowhere is the responsibility more demanding or the potential for support, caring and love greater than in the family. At times, raising a gifted child seems overwhelming. We become frustrated with the child, ourselves and the system. We cannot magically wave a wand and make life simple or blissful. We can, however, gain some insight from others who have shared similar concerns and have learned to cope with the demands of parenting a gifted child.

The information in this issue was inspired by all those parents and teachers who have worked so diligently to provide our students with exemplary opportunities for growth. We have found that those families that tend to nurture gifted children have the following qualities:

Acceptance and Support: Committed to promoting each other's welfare and providing opportunities for growth.

Appreciation: Caring for each other.

Communication: Spending time talking and listening to each other; cooperatively setting clear, realistic and reasonable expectations.

Time: Spending time together pursuing shared interests.

Spiritual Well-Being: Having a sense of a greater power or good in the universe.

Coping ability: Viewing stressful situations as opportunities for growth.

Self-assurance: Feeling good about themselves and having a positive view of life; leading active lives outside the home.

The information that we have gathered in this issue is not meant to be an end, but rather, a modest beginning. It is, in a sense, a small step towards understanding and accepting the challenge of parenting a gifted child. We think that you will find the information stimulating and useful. Because this is just the beginning, keep in mind the wisdom shared by the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step."

Karen Hostettler



California is a great place to live and raise children – with a few reservations, such as the state's lack of commitment to the education of its gifted children. The lack of commitment and concern was brought home once again when the legislature allowed the GATE legislation to sunset. Every year parents and educators must fight for every dollar, every class, every program serving gifted and talented children.

In the past, we parents have been instrumental in the implementation of GATE programs throughout the state. We have been responsible for informing our legislators, school board members, and administrators of the needs of our gifted children. We have reviewed policies regarding GATE programs. We have become active, voting board members of CAG, our local affiliate organizations, and school site councils. We have helped to provide inservice for teachers, assistance to other parents, and service to students. Parents have served on state-wide advisory committees for gifted programs over the years. Unfortunately these efforts have not been enough.

The strength and effectiveness of California's GATE programs have dwindled seriously. We have faced repeated crises at both the state and local levels regarding funding, program compliance, and identification, among other issues. This year is different in the sense that all the former problems and weaknesses are moot if the entire program dies. We must continue the fight. We parents must perform CPR to breathe life back into the GATE program.

First, realize that you are not alone. It's not a matter of you against the world. If you aren't sure of which CAG region you are in, contact the CAG office and ask. Each region has a parent representative as well as a professional educator representative, who can put you in touch with local affiliates, hook you up to the advocacy network, and assist you with your active advocacy.

We parents must be well-informed, dedicated, and willing to give of our time and energy to support new legislation for GATE programs. It really is up to us. Without our persistence and dedication, GATE might cease to exist in California. While other states are beefing up their GATE programs, California is allowing theirs to wither. If California were a nation, we would be the sixth largest in the world, and yet our governor praises the Japanese educational system while ours is "streamlined" to ignore students with special needs. It is time for parents to confront the leadership in California and to become "Jiminy Cricket" for a legislature in need of a conscience. The leaders must realize our future, California's future, depends on appropriate education for our brightest children. Please make a commitment to work in 1989 toward this goal. Simply voting is not enough. Your senator and assemblyperson have to learn that what California is doing to its gifted children is morally indefensible. Remember, your children are depending on you.

Attribution: A Key to Encouraging More Responsible Behavior in the Gifted

by Sandra Scott Sparling

"They don't behave responsibly." Is this a complaint you have with gifted (and non-gifted) students? Fifteen years of working with teachers and parents make it evident that most methods of dealing with children's behavior encourage obedience but *inhibit* personal responsibility! Since teachers and parents profess to want more than compliance with rules which they must devise, impose, and continually reinforce, it is essential that their methods of managing behavior *allow* more. Attribution theory, an important branch of motivational research, offers help for identifying (1) important differences between obedience and personal responsibility, (2) parent and teacher actions that insure the former and prevent the latter, and (3) steps they may take to reduce the inhibition of the responsible behavior they want.

How do Obedience and Personal Responsibility Differ?

Obedience is an externally-motivated response to what teachers and parents want of their children. Responsible behavior is an internally-motivated response to what children perceive to be appropriate. While both behaviors are positive, they have different advantages and disadvantages. Obedience has the advantage of being immediately achievable through teacher and parent control and reinforcement. Its chief disadvantage is that keeping it going often requires continued control and reinforcement (Deci, 1975). While personal responsibility has the disadvantage of taking longer to achieve than does obedience, it has the advantages of (1) lasting longer once it is achieved, and (2) being kept going through student self-control and decreasing amounts of teacher and parent guidance.

Obedience and personal responsibility are hierarchically related (see Figure 1). Obedience is the lower-level behavior, correlating with the first four of Kohlberg's stages of moral development. In these stages individuals evaluate right and wrong on the basis of the external laws imposed by home, school, and society. Personal responsibility, on the other hand, is the higher-level behavior. It relates to the highest two of Kohlberg's stages. In these stages individuals evaluate right and wrong on the basis of an internalized sense of justice and fairness.

Motivation to Behave Positively: A Hierarchy	
Personal Responsibility:	delayed long-term internally controlled
Obedience:	immediate short-term externally controlled

Figure 1

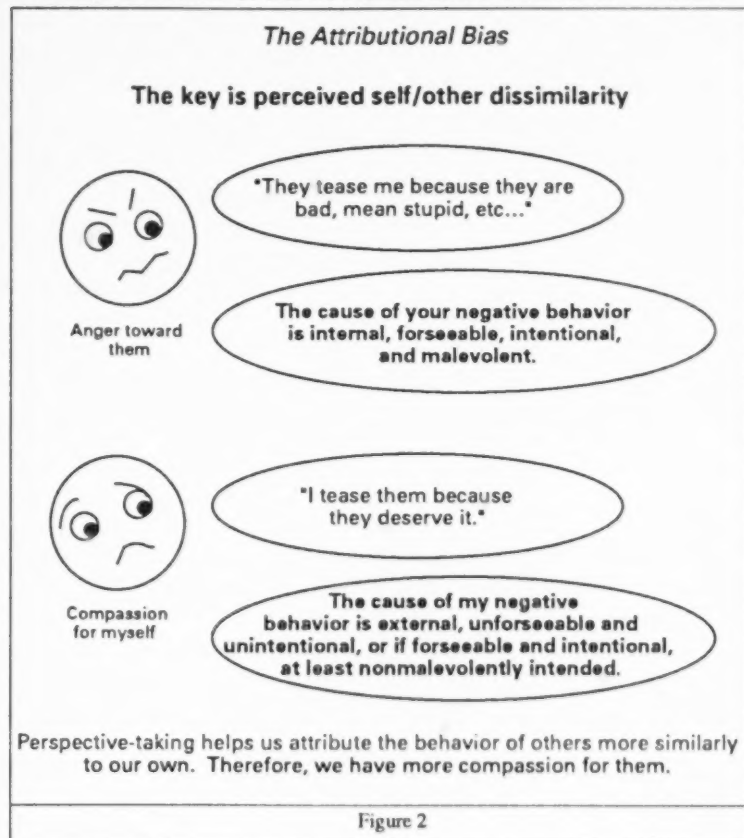
Because giftedness and the higher stages of moral development are strongly related, handling behavior through external control and reinforcement may do more than foster obedient behavior. It may impose a barrier, or ceiling, on the level of moral development and responsible behavior gifted children can achieve. Teachers and parents need to be as intent on removing this ceiling as they are on removing ceilings from gifted children's academic achievement. Since motivation is a key issue in both obedient and responsible behavior, **attributions**, which are major factors in motivation, have implications for how teachers and parents can allow the development of the responsible behavior they seek.

What are Attributions?

Attributions are the explanations we give ourselves for why negative or surprising things happen to us (Weiner, 1986). Attributions about our interactions with others effect our feelings and subsequent behavior toward those others (Dodge, 1981; Rule & Fergusson, 1984; Sparling, 1988; Weiner, 1982; Weiner, 1980a; Weiner, 1980b; Weiner, Graham, & Chandler, 1982; Weiner & Handle, 1985; Sparling, 1988). When something negative happens to us and we attribute it to a controllable cause (i.e., someone else's deliberate action or failure to act), we become angry and are motivated to retaliate and/or punish that person. On the other hand, if we attribute the event to an uncontrollable cause (i.e., the person's accidental action or failure to act), we feel compassionate understanding and are motivated to behave positively toward that person. If, for example, one child is hit by a classmate and judges the hit to have been a deliberate and malintended (i.e., controllable) act, that child will feel angry and likely want to retaliate by doing such things as withdrawing friendship, launching a verbal attack, or hitting back. Judging the hit to have been unintentional, however, will result in feelings of compassionate understanding and the child will likely do such positive things as overlook the incident and move to maintain friendship. Attributions, then, play a role in the *internal* motivation of positive behavior. Internal motivation is a necessary component of personal responsibility.

Another way in which attributions relate to the motivation of responsible behavior is through attributional bias. Attributional bias is the tendency to attribute, or evaluate, our own behavior differently than we attribute, or evaluate, the behavior of others (Storms, 1982). Figure 2 illustrates that we tend to attribute others' negative behaviors to controllable (i.e., internally motivated, foreseeable, intentional, and malevolent) causes while, at the same time, attributing our own negative behavior to uncontrollable (i.e., externally motivated, unforeseeable and unintentional, or if foreseeable and intentional, at least non-malevolently intended) causes. A student who is teased, for example, will likely explain the teaser's behavior as due to her or his meanness (a controllable cause). That same student will

likely explain her or his own teasing behavior as due to the other child's deserving it ("deservingness" being seen as the uncontrollable cause of the teasing response). Attributional bias, then, causes a perceived self/other dissimilarity. This perceived self/other dissimilarity leads us to expect compassionate understanding for our own negative behavior but prevents us from providing it for others'. Teachers and parents must facilitate children's perceived self/other similarity rather than dissimilarity. Crawford (1982) identifies this as the process of identifying parallel experiences (i.e., identifying similarities between our motivation and others' so that we evaluate others' behavior in



the same manner as we do our own). Helping children perceive self/other similarity can produce shifts in their attributions, increase their compassionate understanding, and motivate more responsible behavior.

What do Adults Do that Insures Obedience Instead of Personal Responsibility?

Many teachers and parents become understandably frustrated with children's negative behavior. They often simply stop it forcefully and administer a punishment. Unfortunately, this strategy does not promote responsible behavior. It prevents children from performing the evaluation necessary to perceive self/other similarity and develop sensitivity about what more responsible actions they can take. Consider, for example, the following scenario. Maria, a student, teases Juan, her classmate. Juan gets angry and retaliates. The teacher intervenes.

Maria: Juan, you're a nerd!
Juan: (angrily) Maria, all you ever do is tease. Why don't you stop.
Maria: I'm not teasing. You *are* a nerd.
Juan: I bet I can make you stop (pushes her).
Teacher: Juan! Maria! Stop squabbling right this minute. You know better! Both of you apologize. Sit on the bench at recess and think about how to leave each other alone.
Maria: (sulkily) Sorry.
Juan: (also sulkily) Sorry.

This intervention resulted in the children's obedience but not their personal responsibility. While the children's responses were immediate and positive, they represented acts of externally-motivated compliance with what the teacher wanted. Although the intervention did bring an end to the conflict, it did little to change the anger-producing attributions each child made about the others' behavior. Without such attribution shifts, Maria and Juan would be likely to act in the same way toward each other in future encounters. They would also likely invoke increasingly severe intervention strategies from their teacher. Most teachers become increasingly frustrated with this escalating cycle of negative behavior – punishment – negative behavior – punishment. They seldom realize, however, that a subtle but significant shift in their intervention strategy might bring about its gradual termination.

What Can Parents and Teachers Do to Allow Responsible Behavior?

Only when teachers help children evaluate their conflict situations are children likely to behave responsibly in conflict resolution. Consider an alternative scenario. The initial problem between Maria and Juan is the same but with a different teacher response.

Teacher: (noticing the conflict and speaking calmly) Juan, what is the problem?
Juan: Maria is teasing me and she won't stop.
Teacher: Was it her refusing to stop that made you angry enough to push her?
Juan: (still angry) Yes.
Teacher: We all get angry about things like that. What we must do, though, is find a different way for you to handle it. Maria, is it true that Juan asked you to stop and you didn't?
Maria: Yes.
Teacher: Why did you continue? You know how that feels?
Maria: (eyes and head downcast with no verbal response)
Teacher: Are you willing to stop or maybe even not start in the future?
Maria: Yes.
Teacher: Will you apologize?
Maria: (making eye contact) Yes. I'm sorry Juan.
Teacher: Juan, have you ever teased anyone after they wanted

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- you to stop?
- Juan: Yes.
- Teacher: We all do things like that from time to time. Will you forgive Maria the way you have wanted to be forgiven for your teasing?
- Juan: (making eye contact) Yes. It's okay, Maria.
- Teacher: Stay with me a few minutes at recess so we can come up with some alternatives to teasing and pushing.
- Maria: Okay.
- Juan: Okay.

The teacher's intervention strategy in this scenario permitted more responsible behavior on the part of Maria and Juan. While the sequence took more time, it allowed them to reevaluate their own and each other's behavior, subsequently changing their anger to compassionate understanding. The children's responses represented acts of internally-motivated sensitivity to each other's needs. There were three major differences between this scenario and the previous one. They were the teacher's calmness, the use of questions, and the type of consequence to the children. First, the teacher's calmness allowed the children to stay focused on the situation. Second, the questions helped Maria see the impact of her behavior on Juan and helped both children see how similarly they each would have responded in the other's position. This newly-identified parallel experience caused each child to shift from a controllability attribution about the other's behavior to an uncontrollability attribution. Their resultant feelings about each other were more compassionate and understanding. Their motivation to resolve rather than escalate the conflict was internal and based upon their own sense of what was appropriate, rather than on what the teacher wanted. Finally, the logical consequence of having to stay in at recess and look for alternatives to teasing and pushing, provided support for their motivation.

While the steps taken in this single scenario would not likely end the conflict between Juan and Maria, using the steps in future encounters would likely produce a cycle of decreasing negative behavior – teacher-facilitated reevaluation – decreasing negative behavior – student-initiated reevaluation. This is a cycle of gradually increasing student responsibility. With each sweep through the cycle, the teacher would find that Maria and Juan evaluated more effectively for themselves, more quickly identified their parallel experiences, and more quickly responded with understanding and self-initiated conciliation. Without opportunities for evaluation, however, this cycle could neither begin nor evolve to full student responsibility.

Summary

Based upon implications from attribution research, the following are five steps teachers and parents might take to remove the ceilings from children's possible positive behavior and permit their personal responsibility:

1. Remain as calm in the face of children's negative behavior as you want them to remain in the face of each others' behavior.
2. Replace punishment with questions that promote perceived self/other similarity.
3. If negative behavior calls for consequences, be sure they (a) take the form of logical consequences (i.e., consequences

which involve the child in improving the situation) and (b) are always preceded by questions to promote perceived self/other similarity.

4. Practice your own reevaluation of situations in which you respond with anger and motivation to retaliate or punish.
5. Be patient.

Several schools in the San Francisco Bay area have implemented programs in which administrators, teachers, parents, and students employ steps such as these in conflict situations. Though most do not identify attributions as the bases for their efforts, attributions are involved and are working for rather than against them!

Dr. Sandra Sparling, assistant professor in the Teacher Education Department at California State University, Bakersfield, teaches educational psychology and classroom management courses and does research in motivation and emotion. Dr. Sparling can be contacted through the Department of Teacher Education, California State University, Bakersfield, 9001 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93311.

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A Parent's Perspective

by Carolyn Wood

This perspective is offered by a parent of four children – three currently enrolled in the San Diego GATE program and the fourth a freshman in college. Working for several years with local GATE parent organizations and becoming acquainted with parents of gifted children throughout the city and county has helped to broaden this perspective. Programs for gifted children vary from district to district, while parent's concerns have many similarities.

Gifted children seem to have an endless curiosity and want to know everything about a topic and more. Satisfying this appetite presents quite a challenge for parents. Usually by the time the gifted enter school they are intellectually far beyond their classmates. This age gap may vary by subject area. Many gifted children have impatience with busy work and behavior problems may develop immediately. Other children simply express initial disappointment but conform to daily routine. It is fairly common for a gifted child to have a capacity for lengthy periods of intense concentration. Problems may arise when the child has learned everything the teacher knows about a subject and asks to learn more. Some are told they must wait until the subject is covered in the normal curriculum years later.

At some point parents learn they must take responsibility for assuring their children's education. No one knows your child as well as you do. Are your children receiving an education commensurate with their abilities? Are they challenged – or receiving top scores for work they mastered years earlier? Are they suffering from burn out? Parents of gifted children have been accused of pushing their children. Quite the opposite is often true with children pressing to learn more and parents trying to provide a balance. Are there enough advanced level courses offered to allow for sequential progression in subject areas? Does your school have a GATE program?

For schools providing a GATE program there needs to be some criteria for entrance – and thus we have The Test. IQ testing usually begins in second grade. The prospects of a test can be quite unsettling for families. There are concerns about passing The Test. What if the child has a bad day, or is ill, or preoccupied? Is there only one chance to take The Test? What if one sibling or friend passes The Test and the other doesn't?

Some school districts use multiple criteria and place children according to their needs with recognition that gifted children do not reach their full potential in typical classrooms. Some school districts also have teacher certification programs so that GATE children have a teacher sensitive to the varied learning styles of gifted children and prepared with a flexible program to assure academic growth.

I have not met a GATE parent yet who said the job was easy. Most speak of finding it extremely difficult to help their children become well-adjusted, productive members of society and fully develop their potential. Parents have successfully met these challenges in a variety of ways.

The first task is to help each child develop a positive self-concept and coping abilities. Children each seem to grow intellectually at different rates just as they do physically. Some

have intellectual capacities far beyond their siblings or friends. It is productive to let children in a family know they are equally wonderful, each possessing his or her own unique strengths.

De-emphasizing labels also seems to be productive. If it is not terribly important to parents that one child's IQ score is 2 or 20 points higher or lower than another's, it is not likely to matter much to the children. The IQ score is not a guarantee of success in life, but represents a certain potential. There are some "underachieving" gifted children who have difficulties in typical school environments. Highly gifted children may also have great difficulties in life and may realize quite early that they are "different."

All children need to know that there is someone who cares about them. Gifted children need special reassurance that someone cares. They live in a society that allows little latitude for non-conformity. Providing a safe, nurturing environment for expressing ideas and curiosity is necessary. Keeping in touch frequently with each child may prevent problems from getting worse. Parents and their children need to work out a special set of coping skills for the familiar problems of being too bright.

Gifted children may have a heightened sense of fairness. Inconsistencies and apparent unfairness are easily recognized and trouble the gifted child. A feeling of being different and not normal can lead to isolation or a practice of disguising one's intellect in order to conform. Finding a best friend who shares interests is a continuing problem for gifted children.

Funding for GATE programs frequently is miniscule to non-existent. The nationwide mandate for educational reform with substance, quality, and increased standards for all seems to have been sidetracked. We are seeing a move toward single-track remedial education with a common core of curriculum that does not allow for progression at an individual pace above grade level. "Restructuring" plans at schools allow each site to decide how to spend educational dollars. It is likely that some schools will decide that GATE programs can be eliminated (since the program is considered to be elitist) and the dollars spent instead for more AV equipment or to light the football field.

GATE parents need to become involved with their schools to insure that their children's needs are met. Do not apologize for your child's "gifts." Each child is deserving of an appropriate education. Gifted children DO NOT make it on their own, as evidenced by the disproportionate GATE student dropout rates in cities before GATE programs were implemented. It is incredibly shortsighted to neglect any student needs. The GATE program often sets the tone for excellence on an entire campus and has been responsible for providing an appropriate education for students with great potential. Developing this potential IS the responsibility of our public schools.

Carolyn Wood is the president of San Diego Association for Gifted Children and an active parent in the San Diego Unified School District. She may be reached at 5818 Mott Street, San Diego, CA 92122.

Obstacles Faced by Gifted Children

By Terry A. Thomas

Gifted children often face difficulties that are unfamiliar to most children. The stereotype of gifted and talented youngsters, that they "have it made" and "they will make it on their own," often adds to the struggle of youngsters to reach their potential. Blackburn and Erickson (1986) described five major obstacles faced by gifted children growing to adulthood.

1. **Physical Immaturity:** It is frustrating for a young child to be able to think on a high level, but have difficulty writing the letters of the alphabet, and to recognize that incongruity.

2. **Underachievement:** Learning to underachieve may occur about the fourth or fifth grade as a reaction to inadequate curriculum and an emphasis on conformity. Gifted underachievers differ widely from achievers in traits such as self-confidence, persistence, likability, and cooperation (Gallagher, 1975; Terman & Oden, 1947). Sometimes the underachievers display negative, self-defeating attitudes. They lack a sense of internal control and personal power. Projecting their troubles and faults onto others or fate, their world can seem an unfriendly, unsympathetic place (Cruickshank, 1963). The gifted independent, divergent thinker may overreact to pressures to conform. Rather than comply, they may reject the school program, which can lead to social withdrawal, antisocial behavior, and delinquency (Torrance, 1970).

*"There is no heavier burden
than a great potential"*
Charlie Brown

3. **Adolescent fear of success:** The confusing effects of adolescence can become an obstacle for gifted girls who are often faced with conflicting social messages about success. Throughout their early years, gifted boys and girls are encouraged to achieve, and they are rewarded for their efforts. Adolescent boys continue to receive these messages, but the girls do not. Values such as popularity, beauty, modesty, and dependence are stressed, whereas competition, especially against boys, is less encouraged. These new social messages often affect the desire to achieve among gifted adolescent girls, especially in fields dominated by boys, such as mathematics and science. Approval by others and popularity may become their concept of success. Some women find academic and career achievement to be a painful, isolating experience, which is to be feared and avoided (Horner, 1969).

4. **Too many choices:** The requirement to make career and personal choices can be overwhelming to the gifted individual who has the mixed blessing of multiple abilities. Some gifted adolescents try living up to the expectations of others by attempting to achieve all aspirations and goals. Because they attempt to succeed at everything, they are less likely to

perform to their potential in any area. Being self-critical, they see their own performance as mediocre. It is ironic that those who do achieve in an area may fail to feel the rewards of accomplishment. Instead, they worry and feel guilty about other areas they did not pursue or other talents they did not develop (Khatena, 1982).

5. **Experiencing nonsuccess:** Some students graduate from high school in a top position representing the upper level of intelligence, ability, talent, and leadership. At college or in the working world, success becomes more illusive. Competition becomes keener, and the goals become more important. The experience of failing or even of being average may be totally foreign to gifted persons. Their need for perfection makes it impossible to accept being less than the best. They may become "paralyzed perfectionists," who need a guarantee of success (Whitmore, 1980). Most students have experienced challenges and have learned early in life to accept setbacks as learning experiences, but a few gifted youngsters may have had no experience with nonsuccess. Such youngsters can have difficulty bouncing back and learning the valuable lessons from their mistakes.

Gifted boys and girls need the support of parents, teachers, and counselors to convert the obstacles described above into successful challenges.

Dr. Terry Thomas is an Associate Professor at California State University at Sacramento

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There are numerous similarities between training gifted athletes to excel and parenting gifted children to become effectively functioning and responsible human beings.

1. Athletes have a clear view of their **place and purpose** on the team. Children also need to know that they are "highly-valued players" and that they each have a purpose on "the team." The gifted athlete is not just another player, but an important member of a team.

*Gifted kids need to know their **place and purpose** in the family.*

2. Athletes who excel have dynamic and skillful coaches who model and give them strategies for success. A coach helps each player reach his or her full potential. Gifted athletes are encouraged to strive for their "personal best." They strive to do a little better each day to make their better become their best. *Gifted children need to record their **personal best**, and learn how to accept and validate their successful steps toward their goals.*

3. Gifted athletes have a **bold vision**. They are convinced that they can achieve their dreams. They understand the **Power Impact Ratio**: muscle development in relation to size comes from determination, perseverance and conditioning.

Gifted children need to have written personal, relational and achievement goals. They need to know that they are not just a product of circumstances. "Promoting the willed future supersedes the logical future."

4. Gifted athletes' performance is enhanced when the **home-court advantage** is felt — standing ovations and affirmations contribute to optimum performance. Every success story is surrounded by support. You can call it family or homecourt; the difference is a cohesive unit that fosters positive performance. *Gifted children need to **belong**. They need to know that we believe in them. Emotional nourishment, coupled with high goals, propels children's learning.*

5. No matter how gifted the athlete, a **positive mental attitude** is a must to become a winner. Skills, combined with dominant mental rehearsals, equals results. Attitude is everything once you have the skills to perform. It is absolutely the difference that makes the difference.

Gifted children need the right attitude about themselves, and others and about their work. Attitude determines life's altitude.

*Gifted children need positive nicknames, ones they can grow into, such as **Magic Johnson** or **Air Jordan**.*

6. **Service** is the key. Athletes who perfect the serve, the pass, the pitch, and so forth, control the game. The winning athlete knows that a good beginning causes them to focus on what works. They know that a good serve, spike or pass can literally turn the game around to their advantage.

*Gifted children need to focus on others. It's through **serving others** that they can gain a large part of their own self-esteem.*

7. Gifted athletes know the importance of persevering through their mistakes and challenges. Each setback is only a delay in achieving ultimate success. In fact, the higher the goal, the more obstacles must be overcome to reach the target. **A full-court press gets results.** Remember, it's not over until it's over.

Gifted children need to accept their mistakes. It's mainly through risking that we learn about ourselves and our full potential.

8. Gifted athletes are given prominent position in leadership on the team. When given the responsibility they provide the leadership and the inspiration that contributes toward the winning margin.

Gifted children need an environment that promotes responsibility and leadership. Control stifles their basic needs.

When children...

1. know their place and purpose in the family
2. have parents who look their child straight in the face and say, "I believe in you"...
3. write down their dreams and goals and connect with those who can provide the strategies...
4. experience the homecourt advantage and daily support...
5. come to the realization that a positive attitude works for them because they have parents who demonstrate a positive mental attitude...
6. focus on others and serve...
7. persevere through problems and tasks...
8. live in an environment of responsibility...

Then children...

1. will learn the most about themselves and others...
2. will become problem solvers...
3. will experience the kind of climate necessary to be well adjusted, happy, creative and successful...
4. will become accountable and responsible, effectively-functioning human beings.

Even the most gifted athletes have a limited time to compete with the best. As parents and educators, we have a very small amount of time to influence our children. Keep a notebook on all their successes in the early years and present it to them as they enter adolescence. There is nothing better to create interest and promote success than a history of early achievements.

Gene Bedley, recognized as National Outstanding Educator of the Year by National PTA, also received the Keeper of the Dream Award and the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Association of California School Administrators. He has authored the bestsellers The Big R: Responsibility, Self Manager Program, and Climate Creators. For more information on parent seminars and a catalog of materials write 14252 East Mall, Irvine, California 92714.

Encouraging the Development of Artistic and Creative Talent

by Fran Frey

I was particularly pleased to be asked to write about the artistically gifted child and the role of the parent in the development of such a child. I had several reasons for this. First, my work as an educational psychologist specializing in the area of the gifted has sensitized me to the unique emotional and cognitive needs of the artistically gifted child. I have, through my work as a therapist to gifted children and their families, observed the challenge of parenting such children. Also, the focus in the literature has been overwhelmingly on the *academically* talented child. While these factors underlie my particular interest, my foremost reason for wanting to write on this topic has been my recent return to studying the visual arts. This experience has provided a set of unique and personal insights into the plight, both joyous and painful, of those who wish to express their thoughts and feelings through the arts. In the paragraphs which follow, I will address those things that caring adults, whether parent, friend, or teacher, can do to support and nurture the emotional and cognitive development of the artistically gifted child. I will draw upon research findings as well as my professional and personal experiences.

An article on the artistically gifted child must, at the outset, talk about home and school environments which push toward academic achievement and the mechanical skills of examinations, and discourage or prohibit playful activities and exploration. It is not unreasonable to categorize these situations as "pseudo-educational pressure cookers" which frequently prevent children from integrating their high-level cognitive processes and personalities. Undue adult emphasis, while often motivated by good intentions, does not provide for the child's need for genuine emotional support in exploring concepts or personal importance. The need, unmet, can result in the unhappy, underachieving and even despairing children whom we all too frequently see. What can parents do to nurture the personal and artistic development of the gifted child?

The Facilitating Home Environment

To begin, I want to draw your attention to the writings of music inventor and composer John Cage. In *Silences*, the published collections of his lectures and writings up to 1961, Cage asked himself the question: What is the purpose of writing music or engaging in any other artistic activity? His answer, in 1957, was "purposeless play." He further stated that:

"This play, however, is an affirmation of life – not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply to wake up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of the way and lets it act of its own accord."

In the era of the "hurried child" Cage's creative pursuits through non-directed activities stand in sharp contrast. Yet we intuitively know that the expressive person can only create when given the opportunity to play freely and imaginatively. In fact, Shmuckler (1985) argues that a plea should be made for

allowing the gifted child the opportunity to daydream, fantasize, and engage in seemingly non-directed activities as a means of developing his or her *mental* resources. The insistence on formal work and production as the only valid and approved activity can thwart the child's own way of learning. Parental criticism and negative judgement of the child's unique creative and learning style can, as Bolen observed, "turn the person to stone." Metaphorically, a critical attitude and dissecting questions of a judgmental, non-empathetic intellect can turn an expressive person to stone.

Research findings do suggest some characteristics of home environments and parenting styles that are supportive to the development of the creative personality. Singer (1973) observed that an optimal balance for imaginative disposition involves a close, secure relationship of "holding" with a child, as well as time and space for the child to be alone. "Holding" implies providing some ideas and suggestions, but knowing when to withdraw from involvement, staying in contact from a distance and allowing the child to develop his or her play according to self-identified needs. To further support this notion, Getzels and Jackson (1962) observed that uncreative children had more vigilant, intrusive and demanding mothers. Shmuckler (1981) similarly reports that the mothers of less-creative children seem to have a much greater need to impose their ideas of structure, conventional responses, and correct behavior on their children's play with their directive, instructive approach likely to encourage convergent thinking. Shmuckler (1981) further notes that creativity flourished when psychological space was provided by the mothers who tolerated ambiguity and regression when necessary, allowing their children to express inner products without fear of ridicule or censure.

Just as creativity has been seen to flourish in the presence of parents who are facilitators, so too a home environment ideally provides structure, support, and materials with which to explore new ideas. The child needs the opportunity to experiment and try out new possibilities. The parent's role is that of *encourager*, that is, one who is sensitive to the child's need for autonomy but who senses when an adaptation is needed or when new materials or stimulation are required. An encourager also knows when to withhold or postpone judgment on efforts and is not overtly or covertly demanding of what criteria will prevail. This encouraging attitude will both support the child's effort as well as give him or her the courage to venture forth again. The gifted child can and will benefit from carefully considered feedback when provided in a non-judgmental and evaluative manner. Mistakes should be viewed as authentic moments in the creative process. Gifted children can and should be encouraged to take part in planning and judging their own efforts, thereby enabling them to be stretched beyond their levels of maturity and to more intimately experience their own learning styles.

In closing, I wish to briefly describe a relevant experience from my current studying. Having been given a chunk of red

clay and the instruction to make anything as long as it was an object 18 inches in size, I found myself making an object quite *not* beautiful and unlike anything my early days of art study in New York's cool, sleek days of the Minimalist Period would have permitted. I was, in fact, responding to and reveling in the joy of playing with some natural materials and forms. As this object was developing my art instructor approached me, and I grew uneasy recognizing the seemingly ugly, gnarled creation before me. He, possibly sensing this, responded by saying that I must be making lava tubes. I knew nothing of the lava tubes and so he, with great expertise, told me about the lava caves on the Oregon-California border. Upon hearing this, I was able to see the connections between the image I was making and the real world. I was anticipating something of which I had no conscious awareness or experience. The ugly object became quite beautiful. On several occasions I have witnessed the transforming power of working with someone who is an encourager of students. This instructor's experimental attitude toward his students and their work is one that caring adults – teachers and parents – should strive to emulate; for it is through this that individuals are free to create.

Suggested resources for further reading and practical ideas for home activities:

- Jacquelyn Saunders with Pamela Espeland. *Bringing out the Best: A Resource Guide for Parents of Young Children*. Minnesota: Free Spirit Publishing, 1986.
- *G/C/T Magazine*
Box 6448
Mobile, AL 36660
- *Gifted Children Monthly*
P.O. Box 115
Sewell, NY 08080

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CAG's Affiliates

by Linda Loftus

The following are organizations in the state which have chosen to affiliate themselves with CAG. They all share the goals of CAG and together form a strong network for advocacy and service for gifted and talented students. Their programs are complementary to those of CAG and we urge interested people to consider membership in a local organization as well as CAG.

BAY AREA REGION

CONTRA COSTA GATE – Paul Sheckler (415) 820-5391
NORCAL – Anne Wallace (415) 848-6893
SAN FRANCISCO ASSN. FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED – Gail Dent (415) 333-1902

CAPITOL REGION

DAVIS FRIENDS OF GIFTED & TALENTED
Evelyn Verosub (916) 758-9018
GATE FIFTY MILE CLUB – Ray Simpson (916) 485-9660

JOSHUA TREE REGION

PERRIS ADVOCATES FOR GIFTED EDUCATION
Judy Smith (714) 943-6369
RAGY – Anita Dean (714) 686-1541
RIVERDINO COUNCIL FOR GIFTED EDUCATION
Dana Reupert (714) 788-7142

MISSION REGION

CENTRAL CITIES GCA
Michael McLinn (213) 752-2405
GCA OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY
Christine Demmitt (818) 782-2306
PAGE – Laura Mulhollam (714) 397-4700 x 2329

ORANGE REGION

OCC/GATE – Carol Lambert (714) 447-7475
PEGASUS PROGRAMS – Lorraine Bostick (714) 549-4201

PACIFIC REGION

SANTA BARBARA ASSN. FOR GATE
Mila Shaw (805) 687-4773

PALOMAR REGION

ASDEG – Jan Madill (619) 435-8125
SDAGC – Carolyn Wood (619) 453-8167

SAN JOAQUIN REGION

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS FOR GATE
Neil Baird (209) 441-3338
KERN ASSN. FOR GIFTED EDUCATION
Mary Lou Daniel (805) 327-3311 x 273

SANTA LUCIA REGION

AEGT – Marjorie Bowles (408) 251-4394

If you belong to an organization that promotes the advocacy of GATE students and wish to become an affiliate of CAG, please call:

Linda Loftus, Affiliate Chairperson at (916) 244-4600.

What Can a Parent Do?

by Sharon Mountford

There are many things which the parent of a gifted child can do to supplement what is available in school. Even when a school has a gifted program, it may not begin until third grade. The years before that are crucial!

- Read daily to your child as soon as he is interested (usually between one and two years of age.)
- Schedule regular trips to the library to pick out reading material. (I have never met anyone who could afford to raise a gifted child without the public library. The appetite for books is, and should be, insatiable. I suggest a shelf in your own family library where books on loan are kept. This greatly reduces library fines for overdue, misplaced books.)
- Have the child get her own library card as soon as possible and do most of the book selection.
- Provide play materials which can be used in creative ways, not just models and puzzles with one correct way to build them! Wooden blocks, Lego blocks, and other toys with modular and interchangeable parts are good. Don't overlook the play potential in ordinary discarded items like cardboard cartons, paper tubes, and spools.
- Be sensitive to children's reactions to games. Many gifted children are extremely competitive and invest themselves completely in what may seem to be trivial games. Games like Candyland where the outcome is determined by chance may be more palatable to very young children than games in which the playmate exerts more influence on the game outcome, such as "sending the player home" in Parcheesi.
- Find at least a few playmates who are truly compatible, even if it means contrived play schedules with visits across town.
- Take family trips to interesting places where children can grow - museums, aquaria, gardens, historical sites.
- Attend concerts, plays, and dance performances.
- Monitor TV viewing (restricting to a few hours a week) and use it as an educational tool not a mindless time-waster. Watch programs with your child frequently and discuss what you have seen.
- Do not allow brains to be a substitute for social graces or family responsibilities.
- Encourage activities in areas of weakness. If sports are difficult, find ways to build an interest and participation. If math is a parental bugaboo, it may well give the child problems. Find a math club or slightly older mentor for the child, someone who loves math.
- Provide private lessons in an area of music, art, foreign language, or sport which is a strength, but which will require dedication and practice to perfect. Schoolwork may not be challenging for these children, so see to it that there is a real and worthwhile challenge in some other area.
- Regard practice times and schoolwork as the occupation of the child - as vital and necessary as your own job.
- Be understanding of the pressures facing the school. Be helpful where you can, but assume responsibility for seeing that your child is growing, learning, and developing as he should.

- Allow your child to fail or at least be frustrated. In fact, try to ensure that some degree of failure is experienced in the pre-teen years. Admit your own failures and discuss them. Failures are part of the learning process. One of the traps of giftedness is perfectionism. The child needs to learn to cope with efforts and products which fall short of her own expectations.
- Love your child for himself, not for his brain or accomplishments.
- Involve yourself with her life and schooling. Attend school plays, concerts, and games. Read the school newspaper.
- Know his friends, and provide a safe haven for them.
- Encourage the child's empathy and social consciousness.
- Be fair, consistent, and honest.
- Earn your child's respect, rather than demanding it because you are older.
- Respect your child's privacy and time as you would any other person's.
- Enjoy your child, for soon she will be grown!

Sharon Mountford is Administrative Assistant for CAG and the mother of two grown gifted children.

A Vision Splendid Down Under

Sydney, Australia is the venue for the 8th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children, 3rd-7th July, 1989.

It is an apt choice. The country is a vast island/continent, rich in natural resources, and vegetation which ranges from stark desert to tropical rain forests, extensive snowfields to silver beaches, towering mountains to colourful coral reefs. Unique creatures roam the land and sea, and out of the cities, it is possible to find wombats lumbering across the road or kangaroos bounding through the bushland.

Australia is a country of lovely cities, each one very different in character. Sydney is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, set around the glorious harbour spanned by the Harbour Bridge and flanked by the famous Opera House. It is a colourful city with many parks, theatres and good restaurants. Sydney and Australia must be explored!

Members of the Executive of the World Council explored the delights of New South Wales at the end of June, when they joined the Organizing Committee in days of planning meetings. They visited the Sydney Hilton, the venue for the Concurrent Sessions and Trades Display and found it centrally located in the heart of the city, with the impressive Town Hall just three minutes walk away. The Town Hall will house the Opening, Closing, Main plenaries each day, the Children's Concert and the Australian Night.

The opening reception will be held at the Power House Museum on the perimeter of the massive Darling Harbour development and opportunities to visit the unique Opera House and savour the beauty of sunset on the Harbour are afforded in the Conference's Social Calendar.

Guidance Needs of the High School Gifted

by Ron Fontaine

As students enter high school and are enrolled in ninth grade classes, parents not only become concerned with performance in GATE classes, but repeatedly request increased guidance services for their children. The focus tends to broaden beyond the classroom to include preparation for college, career selection and acquisition of skills and attitudes for use beyond high school. The concern of any secondary system must then include comprehensive preparation which will provide the broader focus.

Just what type of secondary guidance component will provide this comprehensive preparation? In a recent survey of the guidance staff of the Kern High School District in the southern San Joaquin Valley, the following recommendations were made by counselors when they were asked: What do GATE students need? What are we doing for them now? What new programs would you propose?

Counselors strongly recommend that ninth grade students be introduced early in the year to a study skills unit. Information about time management, study habits, specific step-by-step methods, and resources for acquiring special techniques in individual subject areas may be provided within a specific

Registrations and presentation proposals are flowing in. We expect 1500 delegates from 50 countries. All aspects of Gifted Education from Research to Resources, Parenting a Gifted Child to Programing, Identification to Isolated Gifted, Creativity to Comparative Cultures will be covered in the range of concurrent and poster sessions, as well as round table discussions.

Plenary sessions will be headed by Ned Herrmann, Eddie Braggett, Paul MacCready, Harry Passow, Belle Wallace, Don McAlpine, June Maker, Brian Start and panels will be led by Norah Maier, Tom Marjoram, Franz Monks, Aurora Roldan, Dorothy Sisk and will include Edward De Bono.

Conferees will be afforded opportunities to move around the city to schools and universities to see programmes for the gifted in operation on the Wednesday of the Conference week.

The Organizing Committee is working tirelessly on every aspect of the Conference to ensure that you have a rewarding time in Sydney, intellectually and socially.

World Conferences are exciting. They afford marvellous opportunities to renew friendships with colleagues from around the globe, share views and experiences, hear renowned educationalists and experience a different country.

The 8th World Conference will be an opportunity of a lifetime. The Conference theme is:

"The Challenge of Excellence: A Vision Splendid"

Do meet your own personal challenge and join us 'Down Under' for what promises to be a truly enriching experience.

Maureen Robinson
Director, World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children

course, most often English. Better still, some counselors recommend such workshops beyond the school day to which both students and parents would come.

Another common concern among these students is the need for college information. Most of these students know they will attend college, and an early focus on the informational and action paths necessary in making choices is strongly recommended. These students and their parents need to examine potential college majors, to become familiar with the SAT and ACT testing programs, to evaluate potential costs and to visit colleges. Such activities as exploration units in English classes, College Nights with college reps in attendance, and follow-up contacts with the California Student Aid Commission and other agencies will help.

There is also concern among counselors for the smaller but significant number of students who do not recognize or understand their potential for college. Often the parents of these students are also unaware, and may need special guidance efforts from the schools to fill this information gap. Female students who fail to consider non-traditional careers, and special consideration for Hispanic females and language-minority students who are clearly gifted or talented but lack the necessary communication skills are two examples of gifted students with special need for encouragement.

Two other broad needs cited by counselors fall into the instructional arena. Students need to develop critical thinking skills and they need to hear messages from non-school personnel who will motivate them to work toward their full potential. Some encouragement to move beyond the school setting seems to be in order.

Some counselors also note that these needs of the gifted might clearly be assigned to the broader band of college prep students. True, say others who point out that the needs are more dramatic and pronounced among the gifted. This same advice holds when counselors recommend that parents should stay involved with the school. A better understanding of the students' activities in every aspect of the school will result in better relationships between the parent and student, and the school and student as well. Knowing the school staff will help with any situation from understanding teacher expectations to handling emergencies. Again, this advice would be good for any parent, but the special needs of the gifted often require special attention. The Kern High School District counselors clearly see these needs.

Ron Fontaine is the Director of Special Projects
in Kern Union High School District
and the immediate past-president of CAG.

*"A life is unimportant except
in the impact it has on other lives."
Jackie Robinson*

Underachievement in Gifted Girls: How Parents Can Help

by Judith Bernal

As parents and educators of the gifted we need to be especially aware of the phenomenon of underachievement in gifted girls and gifted women so that we will be equipped to combat this serious problem. The fact that gifted girls and gifted women are not achieving their potential is well-documented (Kerr, 1985, Hollinger & Fleming, 1984). Fortunately, the problem is not insurmountable if it is confronted directly; however, schools and society in general are still not adequately addressing the issues of sex differences in achievement, with the result that gifted females continue to underachieve in a variety of ways. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us, the parents and educators of gifted girls, to take the steps necessary to provide the support, education, and guidance they need to develop their full potential.

A brief look at some of the factors blocking gifted females' achievement is in order. Socialization is one of the key external factors that inhibit full actualization of gifted females' potential. By the time children enter kindergarten they have learned sex-role stereotypes related to careers (Kerr, 1985). The sources of sex-role stereotypes are rampant in our society with television one of the chief offenders. The effects of sex-role stereotypes can actually influence emotional traits and behavior patterns (Leroux, 1986). Educators, in particular, need to be aware of their own biases. There is evidence that teachers expect sex-related differences (Leroux, 1986). "Through teachers' shaping of their responses, they [females] seem to learn to attribute their academic successes to luck and their failure to lack of ability" (Kerr, 1985, p. 31). By teaching girls to believe in an external locus of control, educators and other offenders rob gifted females of a sense of confidence in their own abilities and potential.

Internal barriers that block females' achievement are the underlying psychological factors influencing their behavior. A number of theories have been suggested to explain these factors. These theories include the "Fear of Success Syndrome" which explains the tendency to view success negatively, the "Imposter Phenomenon" which is a manifestation of women's insecurity and self-doubt, and the "Cinderella Complex" which is the desire to be taken care of and rescued from the responsibility of controlling one's own life and accomplishments.

A more interesting explanation deviates sharply from these three. "It may be, however, that it is not a phobia, complex, or other psychological deficit which prevents gifted women from achieving their full potential. It may be, paradoxically, that it is the relatively good adjustment of gifted women that acts as a barrier of success" (Kerr, 1985, p. 31). Gifted women display superior social knowledge and adjustment; they may adapt and

adjust to, rather than fight, sexist and discriminatory situations.

It is worthy to note that none of these explanations is biological; all are environmental. Unlike genetics, the environment can be changed. The factors which negatively affect gifted women's achievement can be overcome. However, gifted females may be influenced by any combination of factors, among them factors that remain as yet unrecognized. What is obvious is that gifted women face a barrage of obstacles in the road to actualizing their full potential. There are those women who are able to beat the odds and become high achievers. The majority, however, are not able to avoid the pitfalls that the environment has put in their way.

Adolescence appears to be an especially vulnerable period in which many gifted girls fall prey to the negative factors blocking their achievement. Girls may lose their motivation to achieve on IQ tests, as evidenced by Terman's study which demonstrated a 13 point drop in girls' IQ scores during adolescence (Kerr, 1985). During adolescence, gifted girls are thrust

into a "no-win" situation. "On the one hand they are urged to use their giftedness by achieving academic and career success; on the other hand, they get the message that to do so might be considered 'unfeminine' in the pejorative sense" (Higham, 1984, p. 49). This anxiety-producing conflict between the societal pressures

Unfortunately, too many parents do not adequately support their gifted daughters, as evidenced by their underrepresentation at meetings for parents of the gifted as compared to the attendance of parents of gifted males.

to succeed and to be 'feminine' leads many gifted females to underachieve. Gifted girls, in effect, "are asked to adjust to the 'disability' of being female, by de-emphasizing achievement in the face of evident societal barriers" (Kerr, 1985, p. 31). It is no wonder that in the face of such conflicting social demands gifted girls often lose their motivation to achieve.

Clearly, some form of intervention is mandated here. All the evidence indicates that gifted girls are not being served equally by our educational system. Gifted girls are at an educational disadvantage; yet little, if anything, is being done to correct the situation. What is needed is differential treatment that "will produce more equitable education and the requisite skills to achieve success in both traditional and non-traditional careers" (Higham, 1984, p. 43). This differential treatment would encompass a variety of policy changes.

Higham's model for differential treatment involves eight essential points. One of these is programs for parents in which the parents would be "actively sought out and made aware of the importance of their role in their child's intellectual and emotional development" (Higham, 1984). Unfortunately, too many parents do not adequately support their gifted daughters, as evidenced by their underrepresentation at meetings for parents of the gifted as compared to the attendance of parents of gifted males. To better enlighten the parents of gifted girls, the issue

of sex differences should be addressed at these meetings.

Other interventions would include educational and career counseling. Effective educational counseling would provide gifted girls with the extra encouragement they need to pursue science, math, and other traditionally male courses such as pre-engineering and industrial arts classes. Without these courses, gifted females are at a decided disadvantage in the pursuit of many professional careers. Career counseling is necessary to help the girls choose careers that will permit them to make the most of their abilities. If there is a lack of parental interest in their career goals, competent guidance counselors could be a powerful, motivating influence.

Another important intervention would be the introduction of a mentor program to put girls in contact with appropriate female role models. Gifted girls would have the opportunity to get to know women in professional and non-traditional careers, thereby increasing their awareness of the possibilities open to them. The program would provide gifted girls with a mentor with whom they could develop a personal relationship.

Training in visual and spatial skills, single-sex classes in those subjects that are traditionally male-dominated, and participation in team sports are other interventions that would provide more equitable training to gifted females. A final intervention would be to increase gifted girls' awareness of the issues of sex-role stereotyping. They need to be prepared in advance for situations which may arise from sex-role stereotypes before they find themselves caught in the middle of one. Gifted girls should be taught strategies for dealing effectively with this type of situation which they will inevitably encounter. Increasing their awareness of gender-related issues has an added benefit in that it "may result in higher self-concept scores for gifted girls" (Olshen & Matthews, 1987, p. 254). As achievement is intimately related to self-concept, this additional benefit should not be taken lightly.

Although these strategies for differential treatment seem quite complete, they are limited in scope to the adolescent years. Children have already learned sex-role stereotypes by the time they enter kindergarten. A more complete intervention strategy would begin at a much earlier age. Barbara Kerr provides suggestions for such an intervention program (Kerr, 1984).

Kerr's extensive suggestions begin with the preschool years when, among other things, parents should dress girls for active play rather than for watching on the sidelines, provide girls with non-sexist toys, explain their work and the work of others, and take advantage of programs that offer intellectual stimulation. During the early primary years, some suggestions are to allow girls to read as much as they want, provide lessons in the arts or music if they demonstrate an interest, not to push social relationships, and love and support them even if they're not like other little girls. Some of Kerr's suggestions for the junior high years are to conceal astonishment at the girls' sudden desire to be "normal," to refuse to participate in their attempts to evaluate themselves in terms of their attractiveness, and to insist that they continue taking math and science courses.

Kerr's suggestions for the high school years often overlap with Higham's. Some of these are to complete four years of math, provide them with a mentor and non-sexist career guidance, and help them avoid the pitfalls of early marriage and childbirth through sex education. For the college years, Kerr

suggests choosing a women's college, tolerating their involvement in unusual campus groups, early career counseling, and believing in the gifted young women.

All of the above suggestions may not necessarily apply to all gifted females in all situations, but their implementation could certainly help many gifted women develop to their fullest potential. There remains no doubt that some type of intervention is necessary to provide gifted women with equal educational and career opportunities.

By enacting the widest variety of intervention strategies, the greatest number of gifted females can be served. This intervention should begin at home in the preschool years and continue in the educational setting throughout college. The cost of not confronting the issue of gifted women's underachievement is immeasurable and intolerable. The need for specific policy changes to address this urgent problem can no longer be ignored. We, the parents and educators of the gifted, must continue to lobby for these much needed policy changes while consciously implementing those intervention strategies appropriate to our own situations.

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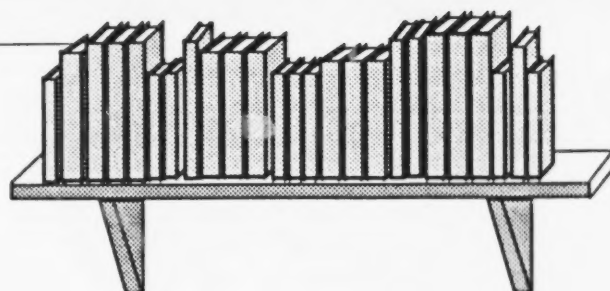
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The Creativity Research Journal

A new quarterly journal, *The Creativity Research Journal*, with a prestigious editorial board, made its debut in December of 1988. The editor sent CAG a call for papers for a special issue on *Creativity and Education*. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with APA guidelines, and submitted in quadruplicate to Mark A. Runco, Editor, CRJ, EC 105, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634. Manuscripts should be postmarked on or before April 1, 1989.

For further information about the journal or the special edition, call 714/773-3861 or by computer, log on to Bitnet: CREATE@Calstate.

The premier edition included articles by H. Gardner, H. Gruber, D. Simonton, Lubart & Sternberg, Csikszentmihalyi, Lumsden & Findlay, Domino, and Bromberg & Moran.



Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being too Good?

Many people don't have the chance to be perfect or the ability to imagine a perfect world. But if you can imagine it, you can also yearn for it and therein lie the dangers. In *Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being too Good?*, a new publication for gifted teenagers, their parents and counselors, Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott shows that while many people have perfectionist tendencies, "...More than any other group, the gifted suffer most from their tendencies toward perfectionism—sometimes for all the 'right' reasons."

And perfectionists do suffer – everything from feelings of inadequacy to procrastination, from writer's block and test anxiety to eating disorders, workaholism and suicidal tendencies. They defer gratification only too well, but fail to take pleasure in the success of the moment. They define themselves by their achievements rather than by their lovable human qualities. When the inevitable "disgrace" of a B paper comes along, they find there's no one but the disappointed achiever inside. Intolerant of themselves, they judge others harshly, too, and are left with no one to turn to but their own unforgiving selves.

"The source of perfectionism," Adderholdt-Elliott writes in *Gifted Children's Monthly* (September, 1988), "...is usually the inappropriate expectations of others... Some children appear to be inherently self-critical. Whatever the source, perfectionists can end up avoiding challenge and giving up easily; they are defensive about what they don't know and... often become underachievers."

Fortunately, Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., by directing its publications to gifted students, has hit upon a nearly irresistible formula of flashy printing, humor, and straight-forward presentation of difficult and often painful topics which hooks the student reader. Punctuated with cartoons, re-quotable quotes, and even the entire lyrics to Billy Joel's hit video "You're Only Human (Second Wind)," *Perfectionism* presents checklists by which students can measure their perfectionist tendencies, and thereby recognize them themselves—the first step in changing something that is giving pain. Adderholdt-Elliott contrasts "the pursuit of excellence" (for example, "studying for a test ahead of time, taking it with confidence, and feeling good about your score of 96") with perfectionism ("studying at the last minute, after three days of chronic procrastination, taking the test with sweaty palms, and feeling depressed about your 96 because your best friend got a 98").

"...More than any other group, the gifted suffer most from their tendencies toward perfectionism—sometimes for all the 'right' reasons."

She also discusses sources for perfectionism, such as being the firstborn of perfectionist parents with the time and means to "hothouse" the harried child or to superschedule with an overload of activities. She offers advice on becoming comfortable with ambiguity, on accepting praise, and on learning to tell when outside help is needed. If the terms sound familiar, it is because Free Spirit books present current research in a palatable format, simple to ingest but thought-provoking enough to take some time to digest. One cartoon asks, for example, "What do you call someone who graduates in LAST place in his or her class in medical school?" Another story details the serendipity behind the invention of Post-it notes—a clear example of a gifted person's openness to the possibilities in failure. The adhesive they use really isn't a success as an adhesive, but as a product...

This little paperback book (\$8.95) is full of self-help ideas, specific examples (like New Music relaxation titles), and at the end of most chapters, a suggested current bibliography, not long enough to be forbidding and readily available. The idea is that the bibliography, like the book itself, should be used.

Recently, Judy Galbraith's Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., best known for the Gifted Kid's Survival Guides, has published two more books of interest to gifted children and their parents: *How to Help*

your Child with Homework: Every Caring Parent's Guide to Encouraging Good Study Habits and Ending Homework Wars, by Marguerite Radencich, Ph.D., and Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D.; and *Dreams Can Help: A Journal Guide to Understanding Your Dreams and Making them Work for You*, by Jonni Kincher.

Evelyn Verosub is CAG's Capitol Region parent representative.

"The farther backward you can look the farther forward you can see."
Winston Churchill

THE END

The end is coming nearer,
Every day it becomes clearer,
The sun and moon joining,
To form darkness, nothingness.

Spread across the horizon,
a silvery line sparkled,
and then was gone.

The end is drawing near.
It echoes loud,
beckoning through my intent ear.

I sit alone,
watching in horror
as the world disappears
from sight.

Every animal dead,
every bird fallen from flight.
No sign of anyone, anywhere.
Whole summers flashing by in seconds.
Night and day running together
forming only a glowing twilight.

Whenever I take
even the slightest breath,
the fear becomes greater.

Pulsing in my veins is the terrible
knowledge that the end is drawing
near.

*by Taryn Wayne
fifth grade
Teacher: Susan Finney
Park Dale Lane School
Encinitas, CA*

President's Column

by Gloria Burns



As Supervisor of the Gifted Program in San Jose Unified School District, I realize the importance of parents taking an active role in their child's gifted program. I am an advocate for meaningful parent involvement, as I firmly believe that no educational program can be successful without building a partnership between parents and teachers to insure that the home environment supports the efforts made in the classroom. Any program to improve the quality must be built solidly on a commitment to find ways to involve parents in the program and develop respect, cooperation, and understanding between the parents and the GATE staff.

During the past decade we have seen a resurgence of parent involvement in gifted education with parents serving on advisory committees, working as paraprofessionals in GATE classrooms, assisting with before and after school enrichment opportunities and, most importantly, providing a strong advocacy for legislation effecting changes in the program. Too often we educators lose perspective of the roles the parents of gifted children can play in strengthening the underpinnings of the program. A district would be remiss in not addressing the needs of these students and listening to their parents. The Advisory Committee is an important vehicle in providing the opportunity to share ideas and programs. Parental concerns about curriculum, groupings, enrichment options, and social and emotional problems can all be discussed and clarified at advisory council meetings. The needs of the gifted child are unique and parents are concerned that they be met. We must establish an opportunity for our parents to speak freely and to have trust in the system that has the responsibility for educating their child. Then our parents can provide the strong advocacy position necessary for the continuation and improvement of the program.

As we move into another legislative year, we will be working together to bring about the passage of a new bill for gifted education. The role of advocate is of paramount importance for all of us, and must be a vital part of our support. To become an effective advocate, one must be involved and informed. In the advocacy movement, each of us is important, but no one is more important than the parent committed to his or her child's appropriate education!

Beyond Peter and the Wolf: Children and Concerts

by Evelyn Verosub

At his first concert he sat cross-legged on his seat, facing the balcony. In the third row center, mind you. Fortunately the world-famous cellist played most of the concert with his eyes closed. But in the car Ellis hummed the melody to the last movement of the concerto all the way home. He was five and had been playing Suzuki cello for a whole year – the same piece.

Next time he learned about encores. Having survived to the end of the program, he was packing up mentally when out came the same old people, bowing and smiling – and starting in again! He turned to his mother gasping, "But, but, but..." By the second he was furious: and when, to the general delight of the audience, the performers came out for the third time, the little boy in the fifth row started to cry.

Is taking children to concerts worth it? It certainly isn't worth disturbing other people. That's Rule Number One. But if the child can sit still and survive encores (in other words behave better than many adults), it's not only worth it, it's a parental obligation. A sad revelation prompted us to buy Ellis his first season tickets when he was seven and well into his third year as a cellist. One evening as we were leaving for a concert without him, his babysitter asked us when we would return. When we couldn't give an exact time, it occurred to us that she didn't know very much about concerts. She told us that of course she had been to many concerts during nine years of violin study. Student recitals. Now, student recitals in our town can attain professional caliber, but children who take music lessons have the right, as well as the need, to hear real professionals, not just one another!

How does one get to the point where it's comfortable and pleasurable for both child and parent? Think of it in terms of introducing children to camping, with all of the planning and effort which that takes. Appreciating concerts is a learned skill. We found we had to alter our habits and in some cases our tastes in music to share this important family value with our children.

At first, the shorter the concert, the better. I credit peanut butter and a local outdoor lunch music series with Ellis's ability to sit through a short program, identify instruments, and find something to watch during concerts. We progressed to leaving at the intermissions, a phase which didn't last long. Although one friend takes her young violinist only to matinees, we never found fatigue a problem. If he's tired, he falls asleep – on one occasion four feet from the raga player – just like his father.

If Ellis can't see, we may as well have bought a recording. We try to choose our seats carefully. Concerts in the large campus auditorium have been a disaster; the seats are uncomfortable, they are not staggered, and they do not rise away from the stage. By contrast we all love the 250-seat lecture hall where the decor is mostly cement and the acoustics are good. In the symphony hall it's worth taking seats high up for a view of all the instruments in action when a lively work like Copland's *Billy the Kid Suite* is performed. Otherwise we sit under the cellos. Playing an instrument gives meaning to concerts just as concerts enhance music lessons.

The younger the performer, the better. Ellis was able to sneak into the high school (with some assistance from his big sister chauffeur) to hear Joshua Bell, then seventeen, speak to and play for the student orchestras before the real concert. Later he felt he was listening to an old friend and recognized the sonata he'd already heard.

It does help to play recordings of the program before the concert if possible. It's the Sesame Street principle; children don't mind repetition and like familiar things when there's so much new to learn in life. However, children's concerts lost their appeal for Ellis years ago. As Peppermint Patty of Peanuts comments, "I don't know why they always play *Peter and the Wolf*. I never

have understood it." On the other hand, Suzuki play-ins proved to be an excellent exercise in good manners – his and ours.

Our university town is a good place for free concerts, cheap concerts, open-air concerts, concerts with punch and cookies to sweeten the memories, experimental concerts, concerts in beautiful churches, concerts where you can hear your friends, or better yet, your friends' parents and teachers perform. But there is almost no town without a fine church choir, a bell choir, or community concert series. Music doesn't have to be expensive.

We do still get resistance at times. We've "eaten" a few tickets which coincided with a school dance. But more often Ellis asks nervously whether we have a ticket for him, too. Now we're thinking of breaking him in on opera. We'll start with videotapes of "Live from the Met." Something wonderfully lurid – Verdi, perhaps – just the thing for a twelve-year old boy!

Evelyn Verosub is a parent who lives in Davis, California. She has been very active with the Davis Friends of the Gifted and currently serves on the CAG Board as Capitol Region Parent Representative. She can be contacted at 1116 Fordham Drive, Davis, CA 95616.

Playing an instrument gives meaning to concerts just as concerts enhance music lessons.

A Parent's Guide to High School Honors/AP Courses

by Lorrie Wellenstein

Parenting gifted high school students often involves confusion over the terminology used on transcripts and in course work. In contrast to GATE programs in elementary and middle schools with their clusters, pull-out programs, and extensive parent support group meetings, most high schools offer honors and/or AP courses about which parents may receive less information.

Because public high schools are so large and the pupil-to-counselor ratio is high, parents need to take full advantage of any opportunities which the school gives to become better informed about the choices offered to students. If career and college counseling programs are available, this is the time to ask relevant questions about preparation and pattern of courses for college admission. Many schools publish a program guidance bulletin that gives detailed information about all courses offered at the school and presents sample programs designed to meet college entrance and high school graduation requirements.

In making decisions regarding enrollment in honors and/or AP courses, parents and students need to understand the differences in and purposes of such courses. Most high schools offer these courses in a variety of subjects and have developed their own criteria for students wishing to gain entrance to them. Some are open to any interested student while others have prerequisites which may include teacher recommendations and 'A' or 'B' grades in previous courses.

Just as terminology changes over time in designating programs (from MGM to GATE), so honors courses may be labeled AE (academically enriched), HP (honors placement), H (honors), or AP (Advanced Placement, which is a registered trademark of The College Board for their programs and examinations).

Advanced Placement courses (AP) are offered at about 32 percent of the nation's public and private secondary schools. In California they have multiplied in recent years because they are one of the quality indicators used to evaluate secondary school performance under the direction of State Superintendent Bill Honig. These courses are significantly different from other honors courses because they carry a national recognition of their quality and difficulty. AP courses are designed to challenge the brightest high school students in a particular subject area and to give them the opportunity to earn college credit for their high school course work.

The College Board (administrator of the SAT, required for entrance at most colleges) gives AP examinations nationally in May of each year in the following areas: American History, Art History, Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, Computer Science, English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Economics, European History, French Language, French Literature, German Language, Government and Politics, Latin, Music Listening and Literature, Music Theory, Physics, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature, and Studio Art. Preregistration is required and there is a fee for each exam.

These examinations are two to three hours long and most

use both a multiple choice and essay format. They are graded on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 highest. Many colleges give unit credit to students who score 3 or higher, although some schools may set a higher standard.

While most students take AP courses in order to prepare themselves for the exams, any student may take an exam without having taken a specific AP course. This leaves the door open for those students who have developed expertise in a given area through their own interest and/or study outside of the regular school curriculum.

AP courses stress problem solving and critical thinking skills, often utilizing discussion and seminar-type structure. They offer an opportunity for bright students to develop and refine college-prep skills while gaining confidence and in-depth knowledge of the subject. Students with AP experience, whether they pass the exams and earn college credit or not, may be better prepared for college work and earn higher grades than students with no AP experience, according to studies conducted by The College Board. They may have an advantage in the college admissions process, as AP is a nationally recognized program whose courses have a high standard of difficulty.

If parents would encourage their gifted teens to pursue interests and take challenging courses without so much emphasis on achieving perfection, students would be more likely to explore and recapture some of that joy of learning that many of them have lost along the competitive academic road to college.

Honors courses, when not AP, are under the jurisdiction of the individual school districts who determine course content and difficulty. Honors courses are usually more difficult than so-called "regular" courses in a given subject, and may be so designated because they meet college prep requirements or because they require more hours of preparation and higher levels of thinking than other courses. There may be a wide range in the number and subject areas of these honors courses.

The University of California (UC) system asks each high school to submit a list of courses designated "honors" for which students in the 11th and 12th grades will receive an extra grade point when computing their grade point averages for admission consideration. A maximum of four courses per student will be given the extra grade point, which may act as an incentive for students to take more difficult courses without fear of "ruining their GPA" because an 'A' in an honors course would be worth 5 grade points rather than the traditional 4, and a 'B' would be worth 4 points, the same as an 'A' in a non-honors course.

Grading in AP and honors classes can be an area of concern for parents who want students to be challenged but also want them to maintain their high grades. Depending on the criteria for entrance to the courses set up by the school or district, some AP/honors courses have a policy that all students taking the course will receive 'A' and 'B' grades. Other schools give no

such guarantees but may adjust grades due to the difficulty of the material. This way, if all of the students have trouble with a concept the grades will be adjusted accordingly and students will not be penalized with a lower course grade for choosing a more challenging class.

Homework load may also be an area of concern for parents of gifted high schoolers who hear horror stories of all-night homework sessions from parents of bleary-eyed teens. In addition to their course work, these students are often participating in numerous school and community-related extracurricular activities and time is at a premium. In general, honors and AP courses require an average of one to two hours per course per night during the week, and they may require even more time on weekends. It is not unusual for special projects and term papers to be assigned which require library research and detailed adherence to a given format. In addition, parents can expect students enrolled in these courses to have group projects which entail meeting with classmates both during and outside of class meetings.

Gifted students in honors and AP classes also tend to form study groups on their own (similar to those depicted among the law students of television's *The Paper Chase*) which they can depend upon for support and assistance in completing assignments and preparing for exams.

What parents can do to help their gifted high school students survive and succeed in honors and AP courses is really summarized by that familiar parent watchword—*support*. Because very bright teenagers may feel the peer and parental pressure of our society even more keenly than their contemporaries, they are self-critical and fear failure to the point of panic, in many cases. If parents would *encourage* their gifted teens to pursue interests and take challenging courses without so much emphasis on achieving perfection ("straight 'A's and valedictorians only are acceptable" is the message some teens hear) students would be more likely to explore and recapture some of that joy of learning that many of them have lost along the competitive academic road to college.

Kids need to hear parent compliments even more at this sensitive period of self-doubt and identity searching than when they were younger. Rather than asking "Why did you get that one 'B' in honors biology?" a parent could make the road a lot smoother and open the lines of communication wider by commenting "I am so pleased that your grades are high—that honors biology course must really be challenging. What are you studying now?" In this way the student perceives the parental understanding of the difficulty of the course. He has already suffered the self-criticism and feeling of failure to attain his goal of perfection, which is a great enough punishment for most gifted teens. Adding the feeling of having disappointed a parent makes the grade even harder to take.

The high school experience, with its peer pressure and competitive sports and academic programs, may be a great frustration for very bright students. However, enrollment in honors/AP courses can guarantee that the experience is more positive. Not only will gifted teens be more likely to open up and enjoy the challenging course work when classmates share their interests and abilities, but they will also be more likely to receive excellent instruction from enthusiastic teachers who have expertise in the areas they teach.

Because the secondary school departmentalized approach stresses knowledge of subject matter taught, the teachers of high school honors and AP courses usually have college majors in the field they teach and many times have Master's degrees and higher. They also will have more sensitivity to the stress students in these courses are placed under, and will be more likely to emphasize development of critical thinking and problem solving skills through their course work. Although not all of these teachers will have *specific* course training in working with gifted students, they are more likely to have experiential background and will therefore tend to be more accepting of divergent thinking.

The pressures on gifted high school students to be accepted at prestigious colleges and launch themselves on the road to what they see as academic, career, and financial successes are great. Fearful of failure and of consequently disappointing their parents and themselves, they are often reluctant to take the most rigorous courses offered. But honors and AP courses can serve these students well by providing stimulation, challenges, and a creative outlet. This atmosphere of peer and teacher acceptance and appreciation of ability can lead to a renewed interest in and love of learning. With the additional reward of earning extra grade points and possible college units, honors and AP classes may be one of the best ways for GATE students to be served in the high school setting. Parent understanding and support of these programs is, therefore, essential.

Lorrie Wellenstein teaches AP English, journalism, and algebra at Schurr High School in Montebello and has taught gifted students in grades 5 through 8. She is a parent of a son Garrett who is 10 months old. Contact her at Schurr High School, 820 North Wilcox Ave., Montebello, CA 90640.

CAT

by Craig Beck

My cat probably thought I had humiliated him in front of his feline friends. I just was following a capricious desire to do something irritating to him. I put him on my boogie board and floated him to the middle of the swimming pool in our back yard.

What a feeling of omnipotence as he floated away from the edge where I had launched him! He had a melancholy look on his face, and he reprimanded me with a sullen meow. It seemed inconceivable to him that I could have done such a sinister thing.

Suddenly, he made a dynamic leap off the board. He grabbed for the edge of the pool frantically, but his hind-quarters couldn't make it, so the entire cat slid into the water. He swam to the steps, got out, and walked off self-consciously.

grade 7
teacher: Ellen Kamimoto
Ahwahnee Middle School
Fresno City Schools

Parent's Point of View:

Parenting the Gifted Preschool Child

by Terry O'Neal Sorrells

Your small child never ceases to amaze you. You're talking to a friend or neighbor and telling her about what happened last week. "My son," you say, "is three and a half now. He reads, and the other day he pulled out a book on the Morse code and taught it to himself. His sister wasn't like that. Isn't that amazing?" It is not as amazing as the look that your acquaintance gives you. She is looking at you rather strangely and doesn't quite know what to make of this. Didn't she realize that it truly amazed you too, that you may have been hoping that she might know something special to do for a child who is displaying remarkable qualities?

I certainly didn't know what to do when incidents like this happened to me. I had no easy answers as to why my son wasn't particularly interested in sitting with his friends watching *Sesame Street*; he just wanted to play at being an inventor like Edison and Leonardo. The following suggestions come from my experiences of the last seven years.

The first thing I recommend is to look for support, from those who will understand. You need to talk to and be around others who are asking the same questions, and wondering over similar wonders. Look for local gifted organizations (if you're not sure where to look, call a local school to see if they know of a group). There may be enrichment classes or parent groups available. Also, support state and national organizations. They will keep you up to date on what is going on in the legislature and how you can help to make life easier with the gifted child.

Never doubt your parenting abilities. Love and caring are first; you're a parent and you know that. Trust your instincts. It's not easy being the parent of a child who corrects his kindergarten teacher on the Indian symbols she is teaching for Thanksgiving (and your child is right). Yet this same child won't finish any of his school work; he says it takes too long. No one said this is an easy job, but remember that you are the person he loves most in the world, and no one on the face of the earth knows your child as well as you do. Right now, you are the expert on your little one.

Learning together kept my son happy and me sane. When he was two, he so loved the world and learning from it, that it was infectious. I was determined that if I had anything to do with it, my son would keep his natural inquisitiveness and his desire to know. After all, this was what he wanted - knowledge and experience. So I had a purpose that was very clear to me. It was to give the gift of joyous learning, to keep alive the excitement in his heart for knowledge, and for us to have a terrific time doing it.

I decided that we could explore whatever it was that he was interested in at the time. You have the opportunity to influence how your child *feels* about education. Is education something that happens inside the home, or something that only happens "out there" - in school and other classes?

If your child is interested in a subject, he can absorb almost anything about it. For example, suppose your child has fallen in love with crocodiles. The first step should be to visit the local library. Check out every book they have on crocs and gators,

and maybe a reptile book. Go home and wade through your new treasures. Of course, on the way home in the car, he has probably perused half of them, looking at all the pictures with "oooh Mom, look at this!" Now you have facts, where they live, perhaps a book that shows how to draw them. Your child got to experience the library, how to look things up and that the library is a source for joy. Soon, he knows that a crocodile is a crocodilian along with alligators, gavials, and caimans; all crocodilians are reptiles. Now that you've examined so many books, you can buy one that you can treasure.

Go to the local zoo to see live ones. Do a little math at home using crocs as things to add and subtract. Send off to a gator farm in Florida for a real blown-out egg and other memorabilia. Go to a fossil shop in search of a petrified tooth. Once you get started on something that sparks your child you can dream up all sorts of places that might give you more experiences, whatever the subject.

What your child will become is an "expert" on crocodiles. And guess what, so will you! If you had looked upon them as vile and disgusting creatures, you may now have an appreciation of this living prehistoric creature. It is a very powerful, wonderful feeling to be an authority on something. It is also a terrific boost to your child's self esteem. Isn't that what gives us a sense of self worth? Don't we attend college to try to become expert at something? A doctor is an authority on medicine, a good salesman on selling techniques. The lawyer is an expert on the law. Why not let your tiny child have the joy and self esteem that being an authority can bring? It is possible. You see, I watched a young child who had done this, sitting with an expert at the Natural History Museum's open house night, both of them involved in an interesting discussion on crocodiles.

Don't be afraid to explore areas of interest that you know very little about. I thought that my son would like to do some simple science experiments, so I went to the children's section of the library and checked out books on experiments. I went through them and picked out the experiments that were simple yet magical. Zoom! Our kitchen was a laboratory and life has never been the same.

These are some of the ways that you can help your child with his or her seemingly unquenchable thirst to know, know, know. And the best part is that the whole family can get involved. It is educational for everyone, and fun if you do it to have fun.

So don't be afraid to learn right along with your child. Don't be afraid of your own ignorance. (In our family, Mom and Dad now know about dinosaurs and their names, where they were found and when.) You can build a wonderful, enriching relationship with your child. My son became my best friend. We shared so much together. And now that second grade is here, and school and friends occupy so much of his time, we remain very close. I still get to be the one who shares in all the wonders of his young, great mind.

Terry O'Neal Sorrells, mother of a gifted second grader, teaches classes for the San Fernando Valley Gifted Children's Association.

by our thoughts and feelings. Therefore, helping children develop positive attitudes is an important step toward their becoming happy and successful. There are no simple answers to all our concerns; however, there are some guidelines.

1. Think of life as a process of choices.
2. Listen to your inner voice.
3. Take responsibility for yourself.
4. Be adventurous.
5. Do what you do best.
6. Be open to others.
7. Be a risk taker.

Parents can support their children in developing these positive attitudes and actions by providing opportunities for their children to explore, allowing their children to express themselves creatively, and making sure that there are opportunities to play with other children. We need to help our children to develop an "I can do it!" attitude. Having a negative attitude is destructive. Parents can help change their children's negative attitudes (for example: "I can't" or "I'm bored") into positive action by supporting their children in the following ways:

1. Develop good communication skills.
2. Get involved in activities that are enjoyable.
3. Do things that are nurturing and meaningful.
4. Get involved in activities that are challenging and novel.
5. Become successful at many things.
6. Do things as a family unit.

Helping your children become responsible for themselves is a key to success and happiness. Many children choose to become victims and blame others for their failures or unhappiness. It is important to recognize that you can be in control of your life, and your situations are a result of the choices you have made. There is nothing wrong with being unhappy with your choices. You can always make a different choice. That is what learning and maturation are all about.

As a parent it is your responsibility to guide and support your children's choices. It is important to point out the alternatives and consequences of their choices and then allow them to make the final decision. Obviously, less mature or younger children need more support and guidance. The most practical way for you to encourage your children to lead a happy and successful life is for you to serve as a role model. As a parent you need to be enthusiastic about life and live creatively. "Do as I say and not as I do" is a poor excuse for parenting.

No one said it was easy being a parent. Parents are humans, too. Sometimes they are tired or sad and sometimes they don't even know the answer to the question. But that's okay, because they're not expected to be perfect either.

Barry Ziff is Assistant Professor of Education at California State University, Los Angeles.

School Site Councils: An Opportunity to Influence Schools' Priorities

by Judy Graeber

In 1973, the California State Board of Education adopted regulations requiring that every school participating in the Early Childhood Education Act establish a School Advisory Committee (SAC). In 1977, the SAC was changed to School Site Council (SSC) with the passage of AB65. Education Code Section 52012 specifies:

A school site council shall be established at each school which participates in the school improvement program... The council shall be composed of the principal and representatives of teachers selected by teachers at the school; other school personnel selected by other school personnel at the school; parents of pupils attending the school selected by such parents; and in secondary schools, pupils selected by pupils attending the school.

In the years since the passage of AB65, many school districts have adopted SSC's at all sites.

It was in 1977 that I first became involved with a School Site Council. Since that time, I have served as a member, and as chairman of the SSC at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. I firmly believe the SSC is the most important vehicle for parents to use to learn about and influence decisions made at the school site.

Today, with so many school districts participating in AB777 (School-Based Coordinated Program), it is more important than ever for parents of gifted students to become knowledgeable about and involved in the SSC at their child's school. AB777 provides the school with a block of funds and it is the SSC that determines how those funds are to be used. Of particular concern to CAG members is how those funds will be utilized to provide services to gifted students. Obviously, if that decision is made by the SSC, there needs to be adequate gifted representation.

Those of us who teach or live with gifted children see, on a daily basis, the urgent need for special services for these children. Unfortunately, when compared to the needs of the non-English speaker, the migrant child or the non-reader, the gifted child's needs can be overlooked completely or reduced to a minor level. This is why it is critically important for supporters of gifted children to be their voice when priorities are determined and budgets established. Positions on the SSC are elected; however, the SSC meetings should be open to the public. Those attending the meeting have the right to participate in every way except the actual vote.

Contact the principal at your child's school. Find out when the SSC meetings are held and let him or her know you plan to attend. Learn as much as you can about the management of the school and the decision-making process used. Take a positive, supportive attitude with you. Let the SSC members know you are there because you are interested, not critical.

By participating in SSC meetings during this school year, you can raise the awareness of the School Site Council to the needs of gifted children. When election time rolls around again, request that your name be placed on the ballot. If elected, you'll have a vote and the ability to make a real difference in the educational opportunities offered to these special children.

Judy Graeber is CAG's Joshua Tree Region parent representative.

"At-Risk" identifies a variety of dysfunctional behaviors.

Do you as a parent (or teacher) have your eyes closed to the indications of a youth at risk in your home (or class)? Are you "protecting" a youth at risk from the natural consequences of his or her actions? Are you aiding and abetting a youth in "suicide on the installment plan" by enabling the youth's self-destructive behavior? "At-risk" does not exclude gifted and talented young people!

Consider the youths you know as you answer the following questions:

1. Has this person changed sleeping habits?
2. Has this person changed friends?
3. Has this person changed eating habits?
4. Has this person changed patterns of relating to parents or other adults?
5. Has this person changed the degree of willingness to abide by family or school rules or mores?
6. Has this person changed the amount of time spent alone in the bathroom or bedroom?
7. Has this person's school achievement changed?
8. Has this person changed interests and/or out-of-school activities?
9. Has this person changed clothing and/or make-up or hair styles?
10. Does this person have a relative or friend who has alcohol, drug, or eating disorders? Does a relative or friend experience depression, or has s/he experienced early sexualization or early pregnancy? Does this person smoke or hang out with friends who smoke under age?
11. Has this person experienced sexual abuse as a child?
12. Has this person expressed a desire that (a) parent(s) would drink or use drugs less?
13. Has this person given away cherished possessions?
14. Has this person frequently smelled of vomit or breath freshener?
15. Has this person frequently used nasal sprays?
16. Has this person frequently used Murine or Visine?
17. Has this person experienced repeated illnesses, coughs, infections, or runny noses?
18. Has this person changed weight?
19. Has this person experienced difficulty with the law, or has she or he expressed fear when police were in the vicinity?
20. Has this person expressed a preoccupation with death?
21. Has this person had drugs, alcohol, or paraphernalia in his or her possession?
22. Has this person used unusual quantities of white-out or glue?
23. Was this person shy and/or aggressive as a first grader?
24. Has this person demonstrated a lack of self-acceptance?

If the youth exhibits several of these behaviors she or he may be at-risk. Many of the indicators overlap. To help you interpret the warning signs, the following table groups the signs for each risk category.

Warnings

Alcohol:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,17,18,19,20,21,23,24

Drugs:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24

Sexual Behavior & Pregnancy:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,14,17,18,24

Eating Disorders:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,17,18,21,24

Depression:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,18,20,24

Child of a Substance Abuser: 12

Now what?

What can be done?

LISTEN. Ask questions. Observe more closely. **Seek** additional information and support from:

Alanon

Co-Anon

Co-Dependents Anonymous

Cocaine Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous

Narcotics Anonymous

Overeaters Anonymous – HOW (Honesty, Open-mindedness, and Willingness) includes bulimics and anorexics

Suicide Hotline

IADARP (Interagency Drug Abuse Recovery Programs)

PDAP (Palmer Drug Abuse Program)

National Council on Alcoholism

Planned Parenthood

Employee Assistance Program of major employers

Local school district

IMPACT training materials (drugs and alcohol) in Los Angeles Unified School District
Psychologists, school counselors, and teachers

You, the parent or educator, are not alone. To release the denial systems inherent in all of the questions above means that you already have come a long way. Don't delay. Time is essential in dealing with each of the dysfunctions above. The sooner that intervention and assistance are obtained, the sooner the adults can cease to enable the young person and the sooner well-being can be restored to the youth and the family. The roads are not easy ones, however, support groups exist in your community. Ask. The honesty with which you assess the situation may mean the difference between life and death.

Cynthia Myers was a youth and young adult "at risk" who, after 18 years of teaching, is now the Secondary English Specialist for Los Angeles Unified School District and Chair of CAG's Youth at Risk Inquiry Committee.

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Parenting the Gifted should be a Laughing Matter

by Doug Sebring

Laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and somebody wants to know why you're trying to ruin his day.

A frequently noted characteristic of gifted children is a sense of humor. Is this an unjustified stereotype, or do these children really evidence more humor in their interactions with other? Most children bring joy to their parent's lives, but can they execute the punchline correctly? Gifted children can often rival Johnny Carson. Just as debate surrounds the origin of intelligence (or intelligences), there is little agreement on the source of one's sense of humor. However, parents unquestionably contribute to the development of each. Parents can help to cultivate their child's ability to laugh and to make others laugh.

Possessing a viable sense of humor or ability to laugh can contribute markedly to one's social and emotional adjustment. Knowing when and how to laugh and when and how to make others laugh enables children to become more valued members of nearly any group.

Joking can relieve stress and tension, feelings often associated with academic endeavors. A well-timed joke or humorous comment can divert attention from a mistake or failure, which even gifted children experience. When parents laugh following their errors, they suggest to their children that such a response is acceptable behavior. This attitude helps the child to learn to laugh at one's own mistakes or goofs instead of taking oneself too seriously. Gifted children often possess greater sensitivity and awareness which may lead them to be overly critical. Recognizing their imperfection by learning to find humor in their errors allows children to lessen personal expectations and to become more tolerant of themselves and other.

Not only does being able to laugh at oneself lessen the impact of possibly embarrassing circumstances, it can lower one's inhibitions. Laughter incites laughter which leads to acceptance by others. Such overt acceptance can encourage a normally reticent child to participate in a group or activity. Using one's sense of humor may prove to be the initial step that an academically talented student takes to eliminate barriers which arise over grades or successes. Humor is a superb ice-breaker.

Learning to recognize humor around oneself diminishes the significance of some failures, losses, or disappointments. While laughter is not always the best medicine, it can decrease the frequency with which one must seek help. Anyone who laughs at every adversity certainly is refusing to deal with problems; however, occasional chuckling allows one to put concerns in another perspective.

As a socializing skill for gifted children, a good sense of humor ranks very close to athletic skill. Either ability gains greater initial acceptance among peers than nearly any other trait. A person who can help us win a game or who can make us laugh possesses immediate value to us.

On the other hand, developing a quick wit or ability to evoke laughter can serve as a potent self-defense mechanism.

The gifted child who may become the object of verbal abuse because of school achievement may neutralize such attacks by directing an assailant's attention to a ludicrous event or circumstance. Getting others to laugh with us defuses potentially negative situations.

The need for a quick wit or sense of humor is obvious, but what can parents do to assist their gifted offspring? Possibly paramount is teaching the gifted children to avoid using their abilities to tease, embarrass, or ridicule other children. Advanced vocabulary and verbal skills can become malicious if improperly used. Similarly, physical humor is often imitation or caricature. Parental guidance remains essential to prevent abuse.

Parents should laugh often; let children know that the family enjoys and values humor. Since parents are the child's first model, such an attitude should begin early, but it is almost never too late to begin. (Parents of adolescents cannot do anything correctly anyway, so they may as well try to be humorous.)

Encourage the appreciation of humor in others: compliment other people's jokes, puns and double entendres. Take the time to discuss why cartoons and jokes are funny. Even though gifted children may possess adultlike vocabulary, lack of experiences and the nuance of language put them at a disadvantage.

Exchange jokes and riddles with your child. Not only does such activity enhance "humorability," it can also produce intellectual growth. This can provide an opportune time to encourage risk taking and creative thinking.

Parents can enjoy time with their children by reading the comics together. Again, some strips require adult explication for a child to get the full intent, but there are instances when a bright child will help the parent discover a different perspective.

Remember that humor can provide an effective form of equalization; gifted and non-gifted children can draw close sharing laughter just as parent and child can. Helping children to develop their innate sense of humor profits them and others with whom they interact.

Dr. Douglas Sebring, NAGC Board Member, is an Assistant Superintendent with the North Olmsted Ohio City Schools.

My One BIG Wish

I could wish for a car
That would take me far
Or maybe a boat
That I could ride in a moat.
I could wish for a mouse
Or even a house.
I could wish for the moon
Or a sand dune.
I'd like some teddy bears
But what I really need is someone who cares.

*Matt Claudis, grade 5
Virginia Ellenson, teacher
Eader School, Huntington Beach*

School for Preschoolers

by Laura Katz Hathaway

Does a gifted preschool child really need school? It depends on the child. Readiness is crucial to a successful school experience for all children, but is more difficult to gauge for the gifted preschooler. Some guidelines can help you decide whether to place your child in school early, and if so, which school.

Both the parents' and the educator's goal should be to respond to the child's level of interest and abilities, rather than to impose academic demands on the child. By responding to the child, you can avoid the "hurried child" syndrome. The child who is ready for academic work will give clear signals. For example, the child who is ready to read will ask you to help her, not just once, but persistently. The child may bring you a book and ask specific questions about words, not just once, but on several occasions. He may also be able to write his name and will know many words.

Some preschool children are ready to explore subjects in depth. They ask questions about a particular area and want lots of material on a subject. Dinosaurs are popular and some preschoolers know all of the scientific names and characteristics of the different dinosaurs. Again, the key is that the child should be interested in the subject, not the parents. Sometimes parents are a lot more ready for reading than the child is. This makes educators wary of the claims parents make for their children.

Parents frequently ask about testing their preschoolers. While there are IQ tests for children as young as two, the test score doesn't tell you as much as the child's behavior. Gifted preschoolers often show intense interest or curiosity about a subject, and have a strong memory and retention of the information they learn. They may have an adult-like sense of humor. They tend to play with older children. Frequently they have a strong sensitivity to emotions or ideas and can see relationships between ideas and people.

When you see signs of readiness in your children, you may be tempted to turn the house into a school room. Sometimes parents go overboard and want to set up a formal school, including flash cards and workbooks. The problem is that these materials emphasize convergent thinking and are rather low level and simplistic. They don't challenge the gifted child's thinking skills. This can turn children off to school before they ever get there, because they think this is what all school work will be like.

Instead, you can sit down and read books with your children. You can read aloud, or you can help your youngsters figure out sounds and letters in a pleasant way without pressure or blame for mistakes. If the learning situation becomes emotional (for example, if you or your child become frustrated), it's better to leave the teaching to school. Most parents are not able to be teachers on a daily basis. That's expecting too much of a parent and sometimes interferes in the parent/child relationship.

Preschool is important for the bright child for several reasons. First, it gives educators a chance to spot disabilities early. Children who are at risk due to visual, perceptual, hearing

or emotional problems can be recognized and appropriate assessment and therapy can be provided. Gifted preschool children also benefit socially and emotionally from interaction with other gifted kids. They gain a sense of proportion about their own abilities and grow from the stimulation of other minds. They learn about waiting their turn to speak and sharing. They also learn to participate in teacher-directed activities as well as self-directed projects.

Most importantly, a good preschool supports their innate curiosity and desire to learn when it is still fresh. It makes learning exciting and interesting so that they look forward to school. Their first experience with learning is not the repetitive situation many gifted children encounter when they begin elementary school.

How can you tell whether a school is right for your child? There are some questions you can ask, and some important things to look for when you visit the school. First, although very bright, gifted preschoolers are still children. There needs to be a mix of activities, attending to emotional and physical development, not just intellectual.

Young children (and older ones as well) learn best when they have the chance to explore things experientially. A variety of hands-on materials (called manipulatives) that appeal to the senses should be available, not pre-cut or pre-pasted materials. When children are working on a project, each child's result should look different.

The school's activities should reflect a philosophy that allows youngsters to learn at different rates, in different ways. There should be flexibility to accommodate different learning styles, not preset patterns of learning. Children should not be forced to conform to materials and activities that allow only one right way to use them, but should learn that there are many ways to complete a task.

Observe both indoor and outdoor play. There should be less structure outdoors, but still something constructive to do. Supervisors should be observing and interacting with the children, rather than talking to each other (or to you). Overall, there should be enough supervision to prevent kids from hurting themselves or each other. Supervisors should set some standards for acceptable behavior. Some schools who say they "let children solve their own problems" do not provide a safe play environment.

As you watch what happens indoors and outdoors, you are likely to see any problems that exist in the school. You should get a good feeling about what you see and hear. If you feel, "I'd like to get down on the floor with the kids and do what they're doing," that's a good sign. If a teacher talks and you cringe inside, trust your instincts. Staff should be respectful of the children and speak in a warm, loving tone.

When you talk with the director, ask how the school individualizes the program to meet the needs of a child who is reading at a young age. The director should respond with a specific answer, not a philosophical statement. Ask what materials would be used with such a child. Also ask how discipline is handled. The school should use positive methods that do not involve shaming the child or isolating him totally from the group. Think of something your child is likely to do and ask how it would be handled. For example, ask what would

be done about a child who doesn't want to participate in a particular activity.

As you talk with the director, notice how well he or she listens to you about your child. Do the director and staff take you seriously about your child's problems and abilities? Can they respond to your needs as well as your child's? You may have difficulty disciplining your child at home, but does the school know what to do? Can they help you with whatever problems you are experiencing? A good preschool can be a source of help with home behavior problems and should be willing to form a partnership in support of the child's needs. When your child transfers from preschool to kindergarten, the school should be able and willing to support your advocacy for proper placement in public school.

Ask about staff qualifications as well. The school's director should have a background in education, not just business. Staff should have early childhood certificates or credentials and experience, especially with bright children. Some schools hire very young teachers to supervise children, but these are not the best choice for working with gifted preschoolers.

Student-teacher ratios generally must meet government minimum guidelines, but this is not the whole story. Make sure the allocation of teachers is reasonable in terms of the child's need for individual attention. Also, the numbers may fit the ratios, but there may be so many children in one room that the atmosphere is chaotic. The sheer numbers may not be conducive to relaxed learning, even though there are an adequate number of teachers. There should be a reasonable noise level, a hum of activity, but no feeling that the room is out of control. You should be able to talk normally.

Many parents aren't sure whether their child's preschool is doing a good job. They set milestones and expect their child to be reading by a certain age, or producing some type of tangible work. At the preschool level, if youngsters are interested in their school activities, projects are not necessary to know that they are learning. Parents can support their preschooler's growth by reducing the pressure for visible evidence of accomplishment. Children develop at different rates and their social, emotional, and physical growth may not keep pace with their intellectual development. A good school supports growth in all areas, responding to the child's actual needs, not preconceived norms.

In summary, look for a school that responds to your child (not vice versa), that is experiential, that offers a balanced program that supports social and emotional development, as well as intellectual activity, and that is flexible enough to validate a variety of learning styles. The right preschool experience can help gifted preschoolers to accept themselves with their special talents and abilities. It can help them find the place that's right for them in the world. And it can provide acceptance for who they are, not just what they can do.

Laura Katz Hathaway is Founder and Director of The Pegasus School, offering classes for preschool through third grade in Orange County, California.

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Guiding Gifted and Talented Students

by Paul Shacker

A handbook for counselors, parents, and teachers entitled *Guiding Gifted and Talented Students* written by the CAG Guidance Committee is off the press. As editor and co-author I can verify the up-to-date research and current practices which enhance the value of the handbook. All contributors are mentors in the field of gifted education and wrote from personal experience as well as evidence from selected works and successful programs, mostly from within the state of California.

What follows are samples of the more provocative pieces of information found in the handbook. Some of the samples are openers which are extended in the handbook, while others are merely food-for-thought or "ah-hahs." Not all is new information, but then some of the most important and valid practices in educating the gifted are not new; the approaches and uses of media may be different.

This article is broken into areas which mirror the layout of the handbook. The intended layout allows counselors, parents, and teachers to select their areas of interest and lets the handbook become a practical resource guide for assisting gifted students whether they be high achievers, non-conformists, creatively talented, or underachievers. Incidentally, the bibliography is worth the purchase price.

Elementary School

- Young gifted students are often attracted to older playmates who are really their peers in interests and thinking patterns. Age-mates may have little in common with gifted youngsters, who often enjoy conversations with adults, because adults are able to understand and answer their questions. Some thrive in the school experience, become natural leaders, and excel academically; others would rather pursue interests which are not addressed at school; and some prefer to downplay their abilities and get by without working too hard.
- Often a bright student is allowed to "get by" with giving much less than appropriate effort. Even a mediocre attempt seems good compared to what others are able to accomplish. When a teacher knows that the gifted student understands the basic concept being taught, an indifferent effort may be accepted. This leads students to become accustomed to easy success and modest expectations.
- Bibliotherapy enables the gifted student to read about other people, either real or fictional, who experience the same feelings or problems as they do. They can gain insight into their own dilemmas.
- The first step is to identify the gifted students. Key times to assess appropriate placement of children are before kindergarten, after first grade, and before fourth grade. Sometimes early identification of highly verbal children results in too much pressure for them in upper grades, especially if they lack performance skills. Likewise, introverted gifted children may not be noticed at kindergarten, but they may be ready for more challenge in later years.

Continued on next page

- Planned activities by classroom teachers can help build self-esteem, communication skills, and problem solving skills. Excellent activities: role playing...class meetings... relaxation and visualization techniques.
- Parents must remember that their gifted children are children first and gifted second (or third). Though they seem to have insight and information beyond their age, children do not have enough experience to provide perspective for their concerns...
- Be certain children do not feel pressured either by having unrealistic expectations to perform or by being overloaded with opportunities for enrichment and growth. Help them to set goals and priorities appropriate to their capabilities, interests, and age levels...

Middle School

- In general, this age group is motivated more by peers than by parents, teachers, or other adults... At this point the gifted begin to act out their non-conforming behaviors. They vacillate from wanting to work independently to wanting peer group approval.
- Teaching styles should match the manner in which GATE students learn best - through independent, self-directed frameworks. They enjoy generating their own knowledge, because these efforts meet their need to create their own structure and satisfy their desire to know.
- When the gifted are viewed as irresponsible, it may be more a matter of how their creative behavior is viewed in a conventional classroom than an accurate description of how they accept responsibility.
- The gifted experience a strong drive to satisfy their internal need for perfection and to reach parental standards of excellence. The gifted are less conforming and more self-sufficient, sometimes rebelling against a society perceived to be "phony." There is a belief that they are protected from delinquency by virtue of their superior abilities to perceive situations and recognize causes and consequences of behavior; yet, their sensitivity to unfavorable societal conditions sometimes makes them more vulnerable to problems of home, school, and community.
- If ignorance is bliss, then giftedness is stress... From sixth to eighth grade gifted students are continually internalizing value decisions and comparing themselves with the norms, their peers, and authority figures. They often have the farthest to go to become self-actualizing and to establish values which offer meaning to them.
- Acceleration should be balanced with a wide selection of classes for the middle school student, because exploration and variety are basic needs of the gifted at this stage. Gifted students should be allowed to experiment and take risks in classes of their own selection. The gifted should be allowed to learn not to fear failure...
- The gifted, as well as all other middle school students, can slip into mediocre study and process skills if given space to slip. Although most gifted students have the ability to structure mental challenges, they have the common malaise of not structuring work habits if the school and home do not

insist on it.

- Gifted students, both girls and boys, should be encouraged to participate in at least one extracurricular activity or team sport to learn the value of teamwork and competition and to have the opportunity to practice leadership skills...
- Shadowing a mentor and volunteer work show a gifted person how to find success while functioning in social and work situations. IQ and success in living have little to do with each other. How well people manage their emotions determines how effectively they can use their intellectual ability. For example, if someone is facile at solving problems in the quiet of an office but falls apart in a group, then that person will be ineffective in a great many situations.
- Like the students they teach, the teachers of gifted should have curiosity and a strong drive for continual learning. Fairness and a sense of humor are the "clincher" qualities which gifted students respect. A review of research reveals that the personal qualifications of the successful teacher of the gifted are as important as, if not more important than, the professional qualifications.
- Don't be overconcerned parents, feeling profoundly responsible for assuring that all the special needs of your gifted children are met. They will make their needs clear to you.
- Those (young people) who score higher on a test of constructive thinking reported having parents who did not overprotect them, but rather trained them in independence. Constructive thinking depends to a large extent on having parents who teach how to be strong in the world, to learn to handle things on one's own.

High School

- While acceleration and enrichment are essential for gifted high school students, at this age a new set of social and emotional needs begins to emerge. During the high school years, succeeding academically, preparing for college, and choosing a career become the foremost areas of concern for most gifted young people.
- Nearly all gifted students experience conflict in three areas: making a single career choice despite multi-potentiality, making long range career plans before having necessary emotional maturity, and reconciling personal career goals with society's expectations.
- The gifted will never be happy working just for the money. Studies have shown that what gives gifted people satisfaction is a sense of mission.
- The current practice of having several sequential careers can be a great solace to the gifted adolescent trying to make impossible choices. the choice becomes what to do first, rather than a total life commitment.
- They (gifted) need to understand the differences between cooperation and competition, and when each mode may be appropriate. They need to understand the implications of preferring to work and play alone as those tendencies relate to making and keeping friends, social popularity, and social leadership. They also need to learn the art of compromise and negotiation in order to adapt successfully to varying situations.

- They need to develop an understanding of the positive value of humor and the constructive ways it can be used. Sometimes gifted students develop the use of sarcasm or "smart alecky" responses as a defense against being hurt, thus subverting a positive characteristic with negative use.
- The gifted need real-life role models who can provide focus and direction. A mentor may be critical to individual achievement and job satisfaction.
- A counseling program at high school should include guidance in the areas of course selection, social and emotional development, study skills and decision-making, career research, and college selection.
- Buddy systems that match an older gifted student with a younger one for purposes of role model identification and career planning may prove useful.
- Developing an understanding of self and others is critical to enhancing a gifted student's self-concept and developing appropriate motivational patterns. If small group and individual guidance sessions are available, they can provide gifted students with the opportunity to practice coping skills needed to deal with their exceptionality and to provide meaningful behavioral patterns for relating to others. Such activities as role-playing, discussions, and volunteer experiences with others — candy-stripers in hospitals, for example — are important.
- (At middle school) a peer group is hard to find. The underachieving gifted are often forced into a peer group which finds its commonalities in failure rather than in intellectual stimulation and social acceptance.
- What are the factors leading to underachievement in high school? Gifted students comprise 2% to 3% of the student population, and yet 25% to 30 % of those who drop out of school before graduation are gifted students. This statistic was reported in 1972, and more recent studies find this disparity to be growing.
- Teachers must know that pressure in the areas of weakness will never remediate problems, while slight pressure to excel in an area of strength will encourage excellence. Teaching underachieving gifted how to evaluate life situations and how to use problem solving techniques are ways of empowering them to cope with their difficulties.
- Underachieving can be a form of social self-defense because of strong cultural or peer role identification. Deliberate underachievement is seen at times among populations of culturally different young people, disadvantaged youth, and adolescent bright females.
- Culturally different students should be evaluated and identified by looking at the norms of their cultures (not others).
- Depending on the learning disability, written reports could be replaced with projects, action research, and oral presentations... At the high school level, the use of computers and word processing and related technology is important.
- They (gifted girls) prefer subjects in language arts and humanities to those of math and science even though the abilities required are not dependent on gender... Girls seem to lack self confidence as learners of mathematics and need strong support and encouragement from parents, teachers, and peers.
- With females, there is a critical shift in high school from the goal of achievement to that of developing close relationships. Studies show that the will to achieve for gifted girls peaks just before the age of fourteen and declines until the age of forty when it begins to rise again.
- Women who have been successful in integrating career with family are more satisfied with both careers and personal relationships than either homemakers or single career women.

Special Concern: Underachieving Gifted Students

- Underachieving gifted students often make a choice not to perform, which is a form of self-defense against a variety of perceptions. There is a population of students who are never recognized as gifted because of their underachievement, preferring to camouflage themselves in mediocrity.
- Exceptional intelligence certainly does not guarantee a happy emotional life. Gifted students have as much anxiety, susceptibility to the problems of addiction to drugs and alcohol, suicide, underachievement, and parental conflicts as other students, in fact, greater sensitivity may make them even more vulnerable.
- Gifted students who continually withdraw from perceived distasteful activities experience early failure. Failures lead to lowered self-concepts, beginning a negative feedback loop. The single most important factor affecting underachieving in gifted students is a diminished self-esteem...
- It is important to provide for underachieving students in the elementary grades. The opportunity for intervention is much greater at this age than at a later time. In fact, it may be the only time that interventions have potential for success.
- Children with extremely bright minds who have difficulty getting material on paper in a neat, orderly manner due to poor motor skills or a lack of eye/hand coordination also develop stress from their failure to live up to expectations.
- There is only one intervention for nonachieving elementary children. It requires that every possible strategy be employed to provide them with healthy self-concepts... Teaching should support alternative learning styles and risk-taking behaviors.

Section Five of the handbook prints an excerpt from "The Parent's Roles in Counseling the Gifted" by Arlene Munger, an article discussing the balance between home and school and techniques for parents.

Authors of the handbook are Paul Sheckler, chairman, Marj Gatzke Frye, Carol Smith, and Joy Malvitz. It can be purchased for \$5 plus sales tax and \$1 delivery charge from California Association for the Gifted, 23684 Schoenborn Street, Canoga Park, CA 91304. Phone (818) 888-8846.

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happiness. If our children see that we are not self-respecting and happy, will they want to emulate us?

Parents must put their own oxygen mask on first; we can only give what we have to give. We teach that which we are, and what we are often speaks so loudly that they can't hear what we are saying. Here are some possibilities that could help you model self-esteem, autonomy, and that it is good to grow up:

- Tame your brain! Check the authenticity of your thinking. Are you also listening to your Self?
- Listen to your body; it doesn't lie. What is it trying to tell you?
- Be responsible for yourself, rather than blame or react as a victim.
- Consider choices in creating your life experience. Replace thinking that you **have** to do something with deciding that you choose to do something.
- Brainstorm the 19th right way to do something and try it!
- Recognize and evaluate the "Shoulds" in your life. How much is based on other people's and on outgrown lifestyles and priorities?
- Use mistakes to make the situation work for you rather than against you. Consider, "What's good about it? What did I learn from this?"
- Imagine difficult situations on a screen and laugh at the humor you see!
- Write down and think about your goals, your "why" to live.
- Set small, attainable goals. (Learn to play two measures a day!)
- Care for your diet and total physical health. Exercise for more energy!
- Spend time with people who inspire you!
- Take time to develop relationships with supportive friends and a mentor.
- Make lists of "Things I like to do" and "What I admire about myself" and do or be something from these lists every day. Evolve your lists.
- Schedule time for your creative self expression through art, music, dance, or any medium that gives character to your ideas and feelings – an audible or visual metaphor of what you think, feel, or are.
- End days appreciating the good things that you did for yourself and others and the people who care about you.
- Reminisce about all of the people who have ever loved you oh, so much.
- Smile!

Besides being authentic, there are ways that we can encourage our children to believe in themselves, ways to say "Be you." A place to start is to examine your own expectations. Are you replaying vestiges of your own childhood, trying to fit your child into what worked for you and for your family? Do you need your child to make you look like a good parent? At the Orlando NAGC conference, Lorin Hollander pleaded that our children's freedom to be expressive is our most precious resource and that we should never underestimate the capacities of our children.

One of the most effective conveyors of courage is listening. Listen because you express that what your child has to say is

important to you. Listening builds trust. We tend to trust people who listen closely to us and to develop trust in ourselves when someone listens to us. Gifted people often adjust what they say so that they will be accepted. This can lead to not trusting themselves. Careful listening can also be a lifeline. It can convince children that you think that they are valuable and worth understanding. From adults' reflections I've learned that the most conscientious parents can miss connecting support to the children they love the most. I've heard, "My parents never take me seriously" and "I spent my whole time growing up with my parents trying to take the wind out of my sails." The irony is that probably these very parents intended to help their children reap the benefits of their own experience and acquired wisdom. Better that they had just listened instead. Some ways to enhance your listening power are:

- Listen with your whole body, mind, and spirit as if nothing else at that moment matters as much as your child's thoughts and feelings. Listen as if your child had something important to give you.
- Be aware of your body's messages. Keep hands and arms open and make eye contact.
- Allow your child to arrange the agenda. Take your cues from his feelings and interests.
- Try to see and feel the situation his way. Listen to understand, rather than to respond. Restrain from expressing your advice and your own experiences.
- Mentally join your child's world and explore possibilities. The mind is a great place to try out new experiences and to gain insights into meeting a person's own needs.
- Remember that accepting and understanding do not mean liking or agreeing.
- Encourage your child to express his feelings. Help him label his feelings.
- Respect intuition and imagination! Acknowledge imaginary playmates. Guide your child's imagination to be his own voice of encouragement!

Listening says: "You matter to me; what you do and think and feel matter to me." It teaches how to interact with respect and understanding and thus, enables your child to be a safe friend. Your listening creates courage, understanding and trust for your child to eventually be his own source of power, possibility, and safe place.

Another essential element of encouraging autonomy with our children is to give them choices. Bright children, especially, need the courage to live in a realm of possibilities that other people cannot even imagine. If they are controlled by the restraints of other people whose predictions may be based on their own needs, limited life knowledge and experience, children will never appreciate the power of their own minds. Allowing a child to make choices within tolerable limits, and then allowing the child to experience the consequences of his decisions teaches responsibility and autonomy. Nearly all the drug abuse prevention programs that are packaged for school use have a similar theme. The main message is to let children experience that they do make choices about how they behave and that they are responsible for the consequences of the behaviors that they choose. You can help your child explore possibilities and mentally anticipate consequences of choices. If he is disappointed, you can help him find some things he learned that he

might try to avoid next time. Sometimes it goes against the grain of good parents to allow their children to learn from their own experiences.

When Karen wrote her college application essay on the person who had influenced her life the most, she picked her mother. Not for all the carpooling to lessons, not for taking her on trips, not for going back to college and modeling higher education, but because, "She always listened to me and never made me feel that my ideas were stupid. She let me do things on my own and find out what was important for myself." Mom

influenced her the most by what she didn't say or do for Karen; by allowing her courage and self-understanding to be autonomous and authentic.

Betty Meckstroth is a parent, counselor, consultant and co-author of the award-winning book, Guiding the Gifted Child. She is on the Advisory Board and the regular Parent Column contributor for Understanding Our Gifted. Contact her at 2357 Shelterwood Dr., Dayton, OH 45409; (513) 299-0023.

Jingle

Charlotte, Charlotte she's so great
Spiders' legs they come in eighths
Charlotte's a spider and she's a sight
In the web she even writes
Charlotte, Charlotte she's so great
Spiders' legs they come in eighths.

To the tune of: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
(From *Charlotte's Web*)

by Elizabeth Nowlis

A Recipe for a Kiss

2 lips
1 empty room
1 stick of lipstick
2 Cups of love
Directions: Put 2 lips in an empty room.
Cover girl's lips with stick of lipstick.
Pour one cup of love over each person.

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e	nn	n	j	o	o	y y
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e	n	n n	j	o	o	y
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by Christopher Short

Little Elves

Little
Elves
Pretend to
Run
Each
Child's mind into
Happiness
And love
Under all this it is
Nonsense to
Some and love to others.

by Katy Reeves

*All of these students are in third grade.
Teacher: Claudia de Albuquerque
Manchester GATE Elementary
Fresno Unified School District*

Recipe for a Burp

Ingredients:
Quart of Soda
Quiet room that echoes
Directions: Go into a quiet room with quart of soda.
Drink all the soda at once.
Wait for a few seconds. Listen.
Here comes a burp!
ENJOY!

by Ashley Macauley